THE

POSTHUMOUS PAPERS

OF THE

PICKWICK CLUB:

CONTAINING A FAITHFUL RECORD OF THE

PERAMBULATIONS, PERILS, ADVENTURES AND SPORTING TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

CORRESPONDING MEMBERS.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER XII.

Page

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

CHAPTER XVI.

CHAPTER XVII.

CHAPTER XVIII.

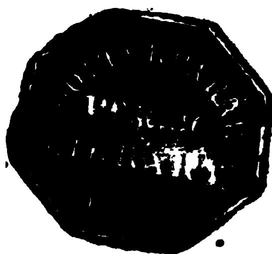
CHAPTER XIX.

CHAPTER XX.

CHAPTER XXI.

CHAPTER XXII.

CHAPTER XXIII.



POSTHUMOUS PAPERS, &c.

CHAPTER XII.

DESCRIPTIVE OF A VERY IMPORTANT PROCEEDING ON THE PART OF MR. PICKWICK; NO LESS AN EPOCH IN HIS LIFE, THAN IN THIS HISTORY.

MR. PICKWICK'S apartments in Goswell Street, although on a limited scale, were not only of a very neat and comfortable description, but peculiarly adapted for the residence of a man of his genius and observation. His sitting-room was the first floor front, his bed-room the second floor front; and thus, whether he was sitting at his desk in the parlour, or standing before the dressing-glass in his dormitory, he had an equal opportunity of contemplating human nature in all the numerous phases it exhibits, in that not more populous than popular thoroughfare. His landlady, Mrs. Bardell—the relict and sole executrix of a deceased custom-house officer—was a comely woman of bustling manners and agreeable appearance, with a natural genius for cooking, improved by study and long practice into an exquisite talent. There were no children, no servants, no fowls. The only other inmates of the house were a large man, and a small boy; the first a lodger, the second a production of Mrs. Bardell's. The large man was always home precisely at ten o'clock at night, at which hour he regularly con-

densed himself into the limits of a dwarfish French bedstead in the back parlour; and the infantine sports and gymnastic exercises of Master Bardell were exclusively confined to the neighbouring pavements and gutters. Cleanliness and quiet reigned throughout the house; and in it Mr. Pickwick's will was law.

To any one acquainted with these points of the domestic economy of the establishment, and conversant with the admirable regulation of Mr. Pickwick's mind; his appearance and behaviour on the morning previous to that which had been fixed upon for the journey to Eatansville, would have been most mysterious and unaccountable. He paced the room to and fro with hurried steps, popped his head out of the window at intervals of about three minutes each, constantly referred to his watch, and exhibited many other manifestations of impatience, very unusual with him. It was evident that something of great importance was in contemplation, but what that something was not even Mrs. Bardell herself had been enabled to discover.

"Mrs. Bardell," said Mr. Pickwick at last, as that amiable female approached the termination of a prolonged dusting of the apartment—

"Sir," said Mrs. Bardell.

"Your little boy is a very long time gone."

"Why it's a good long way to the Borough, sir," remonstrated Mrs. Bardell.

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, "very true; so it is."

Mr. Pickwick relapsed into silence, and Mrs. Bardell resumed her dusting.

"Mrs. Bardell," said Mr. Pickwick, at the expiration of a few minutes.

"Sir," said Mrs. Bardell again.

"Do you think it's a much greater expense to keep two people, than to keep one?"

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, colouring up to the very border of her cap, as she fancied

she observed a species of matrimonial twinkle in the eyes of her lodger; "La, Mr. Pickwick, what a question!"

"Well, but *do* you?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"That depends—" said Mrs. Bardell, approaching the duster very near to Mr. Pickwick's elbow, which was planted on the table; "that depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, sir."

"That's very true," said Mr. Pickwick, "but the person I have in my eye (here he looked very hard at Mrs. Bardell) I think possesses these qualities; and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell; which may be of material use to me."

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, the crimson rising to her cap-border again.

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick, growing energetic, as was his wont in speaking of a subject which interested him, "I do indeed; and to tell you the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind."

"Dear me, sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

"You'll think it very strange now," said the amiable Mr. Pickwick, with a good-humoured glance at his companion, "that I never consulted you about this matter, and never even mentioned it, till I sent your little boy out this morning—eh?"

Mrs. Bardell could only reply by a look. She had long worshipped Mr. Pickwick at a distance, but here she was, all at once raised to a pinnacle to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire. Mr. Pickwick was going to propose—a deliberate plan, too—sent her little boy to the Borough, to get him out of the way—how thoughtful how considerate!

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, "what do you think?"

"Oh, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, trembling with agitation, "you're very kind, sir."

"It'll save you a good deal of trouble, won't it?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, I never thought any thing of the trouble, sir," replied Mrs. Bardell; "and, of course, I should take more trouble to please you then, than ever; but it is so kind of you, Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Pickwick; "I never thought of that. When I am in town, you'll always have somebody to sit with you. To be sure, so you will."

"I'm sure I ought to be a very happy woman," said Mrs. Bardell.

"And your little boy—" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless his heart," interposed Mrs. Bardell, with a maternal sob.

"He, too, will have a companion," resumed Mr. Pickwick, "a lively one, who'll teach him, I'll be bound, more tricks in a week, than he would ever learn in a year." And Mr. Pickwick smiled placidly.

"Oh you dear—" said Mrs. Bardell.

Mr. Pickwick started.

"Oh you kind, good, playful dear," said Mrs. Bardell; and without more ado, she rose from her chair, and flung her arms round Mr. Pickwick's neck, with a cataract of tears, and a chorus of sobs.

"Bless my soul," cried the astonished Mr. Pickwick;—"Mrs. Bardell, my good woman—dear me, what a situation—pray consider.—Mrs. Bardell, don't—if any body should come—"

"Oh, let them come," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, frantically; "I'll never leave you—dear, kind, good, soul;" and, with these words, Mrs. Bardell clung the tighter.

"Mercy upon me," said Mr. Pickwick, struggling violently, "I hear somebody coming up the stairs. Don't, don't, there's a good creature, don't." But entreaty and remonstrance were alike unavailing: for Mrs. Bardell had fainted in Mr. Pickwick's arms;

and before he could gain time to deposite her on a chair, Master Bardell entered the room, ushering in Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass.

Mr. Pickwick was struck motionless and speechless. He stood with his lovely burden in his arms, gazing vacantly on the countenances of his friends, without the slightest attempt at recognition or explanation. They, in their turn, stared at him; and Master Bardell, in his turn, stared at every body.

The astonishment of the Pickwickians was so absorbing, and the perplexity of Mr. Pickwick was so extreme, that they might have remained in exactly the same relative situations until the suspended animation of the lady was restored, had it not been for a most beautiful and touching expression of filial affection on the part of her youthful son. Clad in a tight suit of corduroy, spangled with brass buttons of a very considerable size, he at first stood at the door astounded and uncertain: but by degrees, the impression that his mother must have suffered some personal damage, pervaded his partially developed mind, and considering Mr. Pickwick as the aggressor, he set up an appalling and semi-earthly kind of howling, and butting forward with his head, commenced assailing that immortal gentleman about the back and legs, with such blows and pinches as the strength of his arm, and the violence of his excitement, allowed.

"Take this little villain away," said the agonized Mr. Pickwick, "he's mad."

"What *is* the matter?" said the three tongue-tied Pickwickians.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick, pettishly. "Take away the boy—(here Mr. Winkle carried the interesting boy, screaming and struggling, to the farther end of the apartment.)—Now help me lead this woman down stairs.'

"Oh, I am better now," said Mrs. Bardell, faintly.

"Let me lead you down stairs," said the ever gallant Mr. Tupman.

"Thank you, sir—thank you," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell, hysterically. And down stairs she was led accordingly, accompanied by her affectionate son.

"I cannot conceive—" said Mr. Pickwick, when his friend returned—"I cannot conceive what has been the matter with that woman. I had merely announced to her my intention of keeping a man servant, when she fell into the extraordinary paroxysm in which you found her. Very extraordinary thing."

"Very," said his three friends.

"Placed me in such an extremely awkward situation," continued Mr. Pickwick.

"Very," was the reply of his followers, as they coughed slightly, and looked dubiously at each other.

This behaviour was not lost upon Mr. Pickwick. He remarked their incredulity. They evidently suspected him.

"There is a man in the passage now," said Mr. Tupman.

"It's the man I spoke to you about," said Mr. Pickwick, "I sent for him to the Borough this morning. Have the goodness to call him up, Snodgrass."

Mr. Snodgrass did as he was desired; and Mr. Samuel Weller forthwith presented himself.

"Oh—you remember me, I suppose?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"I should think so," replied Sam, with a patronising wink. "Queer start that 'ere, but he was one too many for you, warn't he? Up to snuff and a pinch or two over—eh?"

"Never mind that matter now," said Mr. Pickwick hastily, "I want to speak to you about something else. Sit down."

"Thank'ee, sir," said Sam. And down he sat without farther bidding, having previously deposited

his old white hat on the landing outside the door Tan't a werry good 'un to look at," said Sam, "but it's an astonishin' 'un to wear; and afore the brim went, it was a werry handsome tile. Hows'ever it's lighter without it, that's one thing, and every hole lets in some air, that's another—wentilation gossamer I calls it." On the delivery of this sentiment, Mr. Weller smiled agreeably upon the assembled Pickwickians.

"Now with regard to the matter on which I, with the concurrence of these gentlemen, sent for you," said Mr. Pickwick.

"That's the pint, sir," interposed Sam; out vith it, as the father said to the child, ven he swallowed a farden."

"We want to know, in the first place," said Mr. Pickwick, "whether you have any reason to be discontented with your present situation."

"Afore I answers that 'ere question, gen'l'm'n," replied Mr. Weller, "I should like to know, in the first place, whether you're goin' to purwide me vith a better."

A sunbeam of placid benevolence played on Mr. Pickwick's features as he said, "I have half made up my mind to engage you myself."

"Have you, though?" said Sam.

Mr. Pickwick nodded in the affirmative.

"Wages?" inquired Sam.

"Twelve pounds a year," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Clothes?"

"Two suits."

"Work?"

"To attend upon me; and travel about with me and these gentlemen here."

"Take the bill down," said Sam, emphatically. "I'm let to a single gentleman and the terms is agreed upon."

"You accept the situation?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Cert'nly," replied Sam. "If the clothes fits me half as well as the place, they'll do."

"You can get a character, of course?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ask the landlady o' the White Hart about that, sir," replied Sam.

"Can you come this evening?"

"I'll get into the clothes this minute, if they're here," said Sam with great alacrity.

"Call at eight this evening," said Mr. Pickwick; and if the inquiries are satisfactory, they shall be provided."

With the single exception of one amiable indiscretion, in which an assistant housemaid had equally participated, the history of Mr. Weller's conduct was so very blameless, that Mr. Pickwick felt fully justified in closing the engagement that very evening. With the promptness and energy which characterized not only the public proceedings, but all the private actions of this extraordinary man, he at once led his new attendant to one of those convenient emporiums where gentlemen's new and second-hand clothes are provided, and the troublesome and inconvenient formality of measurement dispensed with; and before night had closed in, Mr. Weller was furnished with a gray coat with the 'P. C.' button, a black hat with a cockade to it, a pink striped waistcoat, light breeches and gaiters, and a variety of other necessaries, too numerous to recapitulate.

"Well," said that suddenly transformed individual as he took his seat on the outside of the Eatanswill coach next morning; "I wonder vether I'm meant to be a footman, or a groom, or a game-keeper, or a seedsman. I looks like a sort of compo of every one on 'em. Never mind; there's change of air, plenty to see, and little to do; and all this suits my complaint uncommon, so long life to the Pickwicks, says I."

CHAPTER XIII.

SOME ACCOUNT OF EATANSWILL; OF THE STATE OF PARTIES THEREIN; AND OF THE ELECTION OF A MEMBER TO SERVE IN PARLIAMENT FOR THAT ANCIENT, LOYAL, AND PATRIOTIC BOROUGH.

We will frankly acknowledge, that up to the period of our being first immersed in the voluminous papers of the Pickwick club, we had never heard of Eatanswill; we will with equal candour admit, that we have in vain searched for proof of the actual existence of such a place at the present day. Knowing the deep reliance to be placed on every note and statement of Mr. Pickwick's, and not presuming to set up our recollection against the recorded declarations of that great man, we have consulted every authority, bearing upon the subject, to which we could possibly refer. We have traced every name in the schedules A and B, without meeting with that of Eatanswill; we have minutely examined every corner of the Pocket County Maps issued for the benefit of society by our distinguished publishers, and the same result has attended our investigation. We are therefore led to believe, that Mr. Pickwick, with that anxious desire to abstain from giving offence to any, and with those delicate feelings for which all who knew him well know he was so eminently remarkable, purposely substituted a fictitious designation, for the real name of the place in which his observations were made. We are confirmed in this belief by a little circumstance,

apparently slight and trivial in itself, but when considered in this point of view, not undeserving of notice. In Mr. Pickwick's note-book, we can just trace an entry of the fact, that the places of himself and followers were booked by the Norwich coach; but this entry was afterwards lined through, as if for the purpose of concealing even the direction in which the borough is situated. We will not, therefore, hazard a guess upon the subject, but will at once proceed with this history; content with the materials which its characters have provided for us.

It appears, then, that the Eatanswill people, like the people of many other small towns, considered themselves of the utmost and most mighty importance, and that every man in Eatanswill, conscious of the weight that attached to his example, felt himself bound to unite, heart and soul, with one of the two great parties that divided the town—the Blues and the Buffs. Now the Blues lost no opportunity of opposing the Buffs, and the Buffs lost no opportunity of opposing the Blues; and the consequence was, that whenever the Buffs and Blues met together at public meeting, Town-Hall, fair, or market, disputes and high words arose between them. With these dissensions it is almost superfluous to say that every thing in Eatanswill was made a party-question. If the Buffs proposed to new sky-light the market-place, the Blues got up public meetings, and denounced the proceeding; if the Blues proposed the erection of an additional pump in the High Street, the Buffs rose as one man and stood aghast at the enormity. There were Blue shops and Buff shops, Blue inns and Buff inns;—there was a Blue aisle and a Buff aisle, in the very church itself.

Of course it was essentially and indispensably necessary that each of these powerful parties should have its chosen organ and representative: and, ac-

cordingly, there were two newspapers in the town—the Eatanswill Gazette and the Eatanswill Independent; the former advocating Blue principles, and the latter conducted on grounds decidedly Buff. Fine newspapers they were. Such leading articles, and such spirited attacks!—"Our worthless contemporary the Gazette"—"That disgraceful and dastardly journal, the Independent"—"That false and scurrilous print, the Independent"—"That vile and slanderous calumniator, the Gazette;"—these and other spirit-stirring denunciations were strewn plentifully over the columns of each, in every number, and excited feelings of the most intense delight and indignation in the bosoms of the townspeople.

Mr. Pickwick, with his usual foresight and sagacity, had chosen a peculiarly desirable moment for his visit to the borough. Never was such a contest known. The honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was the Blue candidate; and Horatio Fizkin, Esq., of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, had been prevailed upon by his friends to stand forward on the Buff interest. The Gazette warned the electors of Eatanswill that the eyes not only of England, but of the whole civilized world, were upon them; and the Independent imperatively demanded to know, whether the constituency of Eatanswill were the grand fellows they had always taken them for, or base and servile tools, undeserving alike of the name of Englishmen and the blessings of freedom. Never had such a commotion agitated the town before.

It was late in the evening, when Mr. Pickwick and his companions, assisted by Sam, dismounted from the roof of the Eatanswill coach. Large blue silk flags were flying from the windows of the Town Arms Inn, and bills were posted in every sash, intimating, in gigantic letters, that the honourable Samuel Slumkey's Committee sat there daily. A crowd

of idlers were assembled in the road, looking at a hoarse man in a balcony, who was apparently talking himself very red in the face in Mr. Slumkey's behalf; but the force and point of whose arguments were impaired by the perpetual beating of four large drums which Mr. Fizkin's committee had stationed at the street corner. There was a busy little man beside him, though, who took off his hat at intervals and motioned to the people to cheer, which they regularly did, most enthusiastically; and as the red-faced gentleman went on talking till he was redder in the face than ever, it seemed to answer his purpose quite as well as if any body had heard him.

The Pickwickians had no sooner dismounted, than they were surrounded by a branch mob of the honest and independent, who forthwith set up three deafening cheers, which being responded to by the main body (for it's not at all necessary for a crowd to know what they are cheering about) swelled into a tremendous roar of triumph, which stopped even the red-faced man in the balcony.

"Hurrah!" shouted the mob in conclusion.

"One cheer more," screamed the little fugleman in the balcony; and out shouted the mob again, as if lungs were cast iron, with steel works.

"Slumkey for ever!" roared the honest and independent.

"Slumkey for ever!" echoed Mr. Pickwick, taking off his hat.

"No Fizkin," roared the crowd.

"Certainly not," shouted Mr. Pickwick.

"Hurrah!' And then there was another roaring, like that of a whole menagerie when the elephant has rung the bell for the cold meat.

"Who is Slumkey?" whispered Mr. Tupman.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone. "Hush. Don't ask any questions. It's always best on these occasions to do what the mob do."

"But suppose there are two mobs?" suggested Mr. Snodgrass.

"Shout with the largest," replied Mr. Pickwick. Volumes could not have said more.

They entered the house, the crowd opening right and left to let them pass, and cheering vociferously. The first object of consideration was to secure quarters for the night.

"Can we have beds here?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, summoning the waiter.

"Don't know, sir," replied the man; "afraid we're full, sir—I'll inquire, sir." Away he went for that purpose, and presently returned to ask whether the gentlemen were "Blue."

As neither Mr. Pickwick nor his companions took any vital interest in the cause of either candidate, the question was rather a difficult one to answer. In this dilemma, Mr. Pickwick bethought himself of his new friend, Mr. Perker.

"Do you know a gentleman of the name of Mr. Perker?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Certainly, sir: honourable Mr. Samuel Slumkey's agent."

"He is Blue, I think?"

"Oh yes, sir."

"Then *we* are Blue," said Mr. Pickwick; but observing that the man looked rather doubtful at this accommodating announcement, he gave him his card, and desired him to present it to Mr. Perker forthwith, if he should happen to be in the house. The waiter retired almost immediately with a request that Mr. Pickwick would follow him, led the way to a large room on the first floor, where, seated at a long table covered with books and papers, was Mr. Perker.

"Ah—ah, my dear sir," said the little man, advancing to meet him; "very happy to see you, my dear sir, very. Pray sit down. So you have car-

ried your intention into effect. You have come down here to see an election—eh?"

Mr. Pickwick replied in the affirmative.

"Spirited contest, my dear sir," said the little man.

"I am delighted to hear it," said Mr. Pickwick, rubbing his hands: "I like to see sturdy patriotism, on whatever side it is called forth;—and so it's a spirited contest?"

"Oh yes," said the little man, "very much so indeed. We have opened all the public houses in the place; and left our adversary nothing but the beer-shops—masterly stroke of policy that, my dear sir, eh?"—and the little man smiled complacently, and took a large pinch of snuff.

"And what are the probabilities as to the result of the contest?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why doubtful, my dear sir; rather doubtful as yet," replied the little man. "Fizkin's people have got three-and-thirty voters in the lock-up coach-house at the White Hart."

"In the coach-house!" said Mr. Pickwick, considerably astonished by this second stroke of policy.

"They keep 'em locked up there, till they want 'em," resumed the little man. "The effect of that is, you see, to prevent our getting at them; and even if we could, it would be of no use, for they keep them very drunk on purpose. Smart fellow Fizkin's agent—very smart fellow indeed."

Mr. Pickwick stared, but said nothing.

"We are pretty confident, though," said Mr. Perker, sinking his voice almost to a whisper. "We had a little tea-party here, last night—five-and-forty women, my dear sir—and gave every one of 'em a green-parasol when they went away."

"A parasol!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fact, my dear sir, fact. Five-and-forty green parasols, at seven and six-pence a-piece. All women like finery—extraordinary the effect of those para-

sols. Secured all their husbands, and half their brothers—beats stockings, and flannel, and all that sort of thing hollow. My idea, my dear sir, entirely. Hail, rain, or sunshine, you can't walk half a dozen yards up the street, without encountering half a dozen green parasols."

Here the little man indulged in a convulsion of mirth, which was only checked by the entrance of a third party.

This was a tall, thin man, with a sandy coloured head inclined to baldness, and a face in which solemn importance was blended with a look of unfathomable profundity. He was dressed in a long brown surtout, with a black cloth waistcoat, and drab-trousers. A double eye-glass dangled at his waistcoat: and on his head he wore a very low-crowned hat with a broad brim. The new comer was introduced to Mr. Pickwick as Mr. Pott, the editor of the Eatanswill Gazette. After a few preliminary remarks, Mr. Pott turned round to Mr. Pickwick, and said with solemnity—

"This contest excites great interest in the metropolis, sir?"

"I believe it does," said Mr. Pickwick.

"To which I have reason to know," said Pott, looking towards Mr. Perker for corroboration,—"to which I have reason to know my article of last Saturday in some degree contributed."

"Not the least doubt of that," said the little man.

"The press is a mighty engine, sir," said Pott.

Mr. Pickwick yielded his fullest assent to the proposition.

"But I trust, sir," said Pott, "that I have never abused the enormous power I wield. I trust, sir, that I have never pointed the noble instrument which is placed in my hands, against the sacred bosom of private life, or the tender breast of individual reputation;—I trust, sir, that I have devoted

my energies to—to endeavours—humble they may be, humble I know they are—to instil those principles of—which—are—"

Here the editor of the Eatanswill Gazette, appearing to ramble, Mr. Pickwick came to his relief, and said—

"Certainly."

"And what, sir"—said Pott—"what, sir, let me ask you as an impartial man, is the state of the public mind in London, with reference to my contest with the Independent?"

"Greatly excited, no doubt," interposed Mr. Perker, with a look of slyness which was very likely accidental.

"That contest," said Pott, "shall be prolonged so long as I have health and strength, and that portion of talent with which I am gifted. From that contest, sir, although it may unsettle men's minds and excite their feelings, and render them incapable for the discharge of the every-day duties of ordinary life; from that contest, sir, I will never shrink, till I have set my heel upon the Eatanswill Independent. I wish the people of London and the people of this country to know, sir, that they may rely upon me;—that I will not desert them, that I am resolved to stand by them, sir, to the last."

"Your conduct is most noble, sir," said Mr. Pickwick; and he grasped the hand of the magnanimous Pott.

"You are, sir, I perceive, a man of sense and talent," said Mr. Pott, almost breathless with the vehemence of his patriotic declaration. "I am most happy, sir, to make the acquaintance of such a man."

"And I," said Mr. Pickwick, "feel deeply honoured by this expression of your opinion. Allow me, sir, to introduce you to my fellow-travellers, the other corresponding members of the club I am proud to have founded."

"I shall be delighted," said Mr. Pott.

Mr. Pickwick withdrew, and returning with his three friends, presented them in due form to the editor of the Eatanswill Gazette.

"Now, my dear Pott," said little Mr. Perker, "the question is, what are we to do with our friends here?"

"We can stop in this house, I suppose," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not a spare bed in the house, my dear sir—not a single bed."

"Extremely awkward," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very," said his fellow-voyagers.

"I have an idea upon this subject," said Mr. Pott, "which I think may be very successfully adopted. They have two beds at the Peacock, and I can boldly say, on behalf of Mrs. Pott, that she will be delighted to accommodate Mr. Pickwick and any one of his friends, if the other two gentlemen and their servant do not object to shifting, as they best can, at the Peacock."

After repeated pressing on the part of Mr. Pott, and repeated protestations on that of Mr. Pickwick that he could not think of incommoding or troubling his amiable wife, it was decided that this was the only feasible arrangement that could be made. So it *was* made; and after dining together at the Town Arms, the friends separated, Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass repairing to the Peacock, and Mr. Winkle proceeding to the mansion of Mr. Pott; it having been previously arranged that they should all re-assemble at the Town Arms in the morning, and accompany the honourable Samuel Slumkey's procession to the place of nomination.

"Mr. Pott's domestic circle was limited to himself and his wife. All men whom mighty genius has raised to a proud eminence in the world, have usually some little weakness which appears the more conspicuous from the contrast it presents to their

general character. If Mr. Pott had a weakness, it was, perhaps, that he was *rather* too submissive to the somewhat control and sway of his wife. We do not feel justified in laying any particular stress upon the fact, because on the present occasion all Mrs. Pott's most winning ways were brought into requisition to receive the two gentlemen.

"My dear," said Mr. Pott, "Mr. Pickwick—Mr. Pickwick of London."

Mrs. Pott received Mr. Pickwick's paternal grasp of the hand with enchanting sweetness: and Mr. Winkle, who had not been announced at all, sidled and bowed unnoticed, in an obscure corner.

"P. My dear—" said Mrs. Pott.

"My life," said Mr. Pott.

"Pray introduce the other gentleman."

"I beg a thousand pardons," said Mr. Pott. "Permit me—Mrs. Pott, Mr. ——"

"Winkle," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Winkle," echoed Mr. Pott; and the ceremony of introduction was complete.

"We owe you many apologies, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, "for disturbing your domestic arrangements at so short a notice."

"I beg you won't mention it, sir," replied the feminine Pott, with vivacity. "It is a high treat to me, I assure you, to see any new faces; living as I do, from day to day, and week to week, in this dull place, and seeing nobody."

"Nobody, my dear!" exclaimed Mr. Pott, archly.

"Nobody but *you*," retorted Mrs. Pott, with asperity.

"You see, Mr. Pickwick," said the host in explanation of his wife's lament, "that we are in some measure cut off from many enjoyments and pleasures of which we might otherwise partake. My public station, as editor of the Eatanswill Gazette, the position which that paper holds in the country, my constant immersion in the vortex of politics—"

"P. my dear ——" interposed Mrs. Pott.

"My life—" said the editor.

"I wish, my dear, you would endeavour to find some topic of conversation in which these gentleman might take some rational interest."

"But, my love," said Mr. Pott with great humility, "Mr. Pickwick does take an interest in it."

"It's well for him if he can," said Mrs. Pott, emphatically; "I am wearied out of my life with your politics, and quarrels with the Independent, and nonsense. I am quite astonished, P., at your making such an exhibition of your absurdity."

"But, my dear——" said Mr. Pott.

"Oh, nonsense, don't talk to me," said Mrs. Pott. "Do you play *écarte*, sir?"

"I shall be very happy to learn under your tuition," replied Mr. Winkle.

"Well, then, draw that little table into this window, and let me get out of hearing of those prosy politics."

"Jane," said Mr. Pott, to the servant who brought in candles, "go down into the office, and bring up the file of the Gazette for Eighteen Hundred and Twenty-Eight. I'll just read you—" added the editor, turning to Mr. Pickwick, "I'll just read you a few of the leaders I wrote at that time, upon the Buff job of appointing a new tollman to the turnpike here; I rather think they'll amuse you."

"I should like to hear them very much indeed," said Mr. Pickwick.

Up came the file, and down sat the editor, with Mr. Pickwick at his side.

We have in vain pored over the leaves of Mr. Pickwick's note-book, in the hope of meeting with a general summary of these beautiful compositions. We have every reason to believe that he was perfectly enraptured with the vigour and freshness of the style; indeed Mr. Winkle has recorded the fact

that his eyes were closed, as if with excess of pleasure during the whole time of their perusal.

The announcement of supper put a stop to both the game at écarte, and the recapitulation of the beauties of the Eatanswill Gazette. Mrs. Pott was in the highest spirits and the most agreeable humour. Mr. Winkle had already made considerable progress in her good opinion, and she did not hesitate to inform him, confidentially, that Mr. Pickwick was "a delightful old dear." These terms convey a familiarity of expression, in which few of those who were intimately acquainted with that colossal-minded man, would have presumed to indulge. We have preserved them, nevertheless, as affording at once a touching and convincing proof of the estimation in which he was held by every class of society, and the ease with which he made to their hearts and feelings.

It was a late hour of the night—long after Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass had fallen asleep in the inmost recesses of the Peacock—when the two friends retired to rest. Slumber soon fell upon the senses of Mr. Winkle, but his feelings had been excited, and his admiration roused; and for many hours after sleep had rendered him insensible to earthly objects, the face and figure of the agreeable Mrs. Pott presented themselves again and again to his wandering imagination.

The noise and bustle which ushered in the morning, were sufficient to dispel from the mind of the most romantic visionary in existence, any associations but those which were immediately connected with the rapidly approaching election. The beating of drums, the blowing of horns and trumpets, the shouting of men, and tramping of horses, echoed and re-echoed through the streets from the earliest dawn of day; and an occasional fight between the light skirmishers of either party, at once enlivened the preparations, and agreeably diversified their character.

"Well, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, as his valet appeared at his bed-room door, just as he was concluding his toilet; "all alive to-day, I suppose?"

"Reg'lar game, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "our people's a col-lecting down at the Town Arms, and they're a hollering themselves hoarse already."

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, "do they seem devoted to their party, Sam?"

"Never see such dewotion in my life, sir."

"Energetic, eh?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Uncommon," replied Sam; "I never see men eat and drink so much afore. I wonder they a'n't afeer'd o' bustin."

"That's the mistaken kindness of the gentry here," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Werry likely," replied Sam, briefly.

"Fine, fresh, hearty fellows they seem," said Mr. Pickwick, glancing from the window.

"Werry fresh," replied Sam; "me, and the two waiters at the Peacock, has been a pumpin' over the independent woters as supped there last night."

"Pumping over independent voters!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes," said his attendant, "every man slept vere he fell down; we dragged 'em out, one by one, this mornin' and put 'em under the pump, and they're in reg'lar fine order, now. Shillin' a head the committee paid for that 'ere job."

"Can such things be!" exclaimed the astonished Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your heart, sir," said Sam, "why where was you half baptized?—that's nothin', that a'n't."

"Nothing?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Nothin' at all, sir," replied his attendant. "The night afore the last day o' the last election here, the opposite party bribed the bar-maid at the Town Arms, to hocus the brandy and water of fourteen unpolled electors as was a stoppin' in the house."

"What do you mean by 'hocussing' brandy and water?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Puttin laud'num in it," replied Sam. "Blessed if she didn't send 'em all to sleep till twelve hours arter the election was over. They took one man up to the booth, in a truck, fast asleep, by way of experiment, but it was no go—they wouldn't poll him; so they brought him back, and put him to bed again."

"Strange practices, these," said Mr. Pickwick; half speaking to himself, and half addressing Sam.

"Not half so strange as a miraculous circumstance as happened to my own father, at an election-time, in this werry place, sir," replied Sam.

"What was that?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why he drove a coach down here once," said Sam; "'Lection time came on, and he was engaged by vun party to bring down woters from London. Night afore he was a going to drive up, committee on t'other side sends for him quietly, and away he goes vith the messenger, who shows him in;—large room—lots of gen'l'm'n—heaps of papers, pens and ink, and all that 'ere. 'Ah, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n in the chair, 'glad to see you, sir; how are you?'—'Werry well, thank'ee, sir,' says my father; 'I hope *you're* pretty middlin,' says he—'Pretty well, thank'ee, sir,' says the gen'l'm'n; 'sit down, Mr. Weller—pray sit down, sir.' So my father sits down, and he and the gen'l'm'n looks werry hard at each other. 'You don't remember me?' says the gen'l'm'n?—'Can't say I do,' says my father—'Oh, I know you,' says the gen'l'm'n; 'know'd you ven you was a boy,' says he—'Well, I don't remember you,' says my father.—'That's werry odd,' says the gen'l'm'n—'Werry,' says my father—'You must have a bad mem'ry, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n—'Well, it a werry bad 'un,' says my father—'I thought so,' says the gen'l'm'n. So then they pours him out a glass o' wine, and gam-

mons him about his driving, and gets him into a reg'lar good humour, and at last shoves a twenty pound note in his hand. 'I't's a werry bad road between this and London,' says the gen'l'm'n—'Here and there it *is* a werry heavy road,' says my father—''Specially near the canal, I think,' says the gen'l'm'n—'Nasty bit, that' ere,' says my father—'Well, Mr. Weller,' says the gen'l'm'n, 'you're a werry good whip, and can do what you like with your horses, we know. We're all werry fond of you, Mr. Weller, so in case you *should* have an accident when you're a bringing these here woters down, and *should* tip 'em over into the canal vithout hurtin' 'em, this is for yourself,' says he—'Gen'l'm'n, you're werry kind,' says my father, 'and I'll drink your health in another glass of wine,' says he; vich he did, and then buttons up the money, and bows himself out. You vouldn't believe, sir," continued Sam, with a look of inexpressible impudence at his master, "that on the werry day as he came down with them woters, his coach *was* upset on that 'ere werry spot, and ev'ry man on 'em was turned into the canal."

"And got out again?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, hastily.

"Why," replied Sam, very slowly, "I rather think one old gentleman was missin'; I know his hat was found, but I a'n't quite certain whether his head was in it or not. But what I look at, is the hex-traordinary, and wonderful coincidence, that arter what that gen'l'm'n said my father's coach should be upset in that werry place, and on that werry day!"

"It is, no doubt, a very extraordinary circumstance indeed," said Mr. Pickwick. "But brush my hat, Sam, for I hear Mr. Winkle calling me to breakfast."

With these words Mr. Pickwick descended to the parlour, where he found breakfast laid and the family already assembled. The meal was hastily despatched; each of the gentlemen's hats was de-

corated with an enormous blue favour, made up by the fair hands of Mrs. Pott herself, and as Mr. Winkle had undertaken to escort that lady to a house-top, in the immediate vicinity of the husting, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Pott repaired alone to the Town Arms, from the back window of which, one of Mr. Slumkey's committee was addressing six small boys and one girl, whom he dignified, at every second sentence, with the imposing title of "men of Eatanswill," whereat the six small boys aforesaid cheered prodigiously.

The stable-yard exhibited unequivocal symptoms of the glory and strength of the Eatanswill Blues. There was a regular army of blue flags, some with one handle, and some with two, exhibiting appropriate devices, in golden characters four feet high, and stout in proportion. There was a grand band of trumpets, bassoons and drums, marshalled four abreast, and earning their money, if ever man did, especially the drum beaters, who were very muscular. There were bodies of constables with blue staves, twenty committee-men with blue scarfs, and a mob of voters with blue cockades. There were electors on horseback, and electors a-foot. There was an open carriage and four, for the honourable Samuel Slumkey; and there were four carriages and pair, for his friends and supporters: and the flags were rustling, and the band was playing, and the constables were swearing, and the twenty committee-men were squabbling, and the mob were shouting, and the horses were backing, and the post-boys perspiring; and every body and every thing, then and there assembled, was for the special use, behoof, honour, and renown, of the honourable Samuel Slumkey of Slumkey Hall, one of the candidates for the representation of the Borough of Eatanswill, in the Commons House of Parliament of the United Kingdom.

Loud and long were the cheers, and mighty was

the rustling of one of the blue flags, with "Liberty of the Press" inscribed thereon, when the sandy head of Mr. Pott was discerned in one of the windows, by the mob beneath; and tremendous was the enthusiasm when the honourable Samuel Slumkey himself, in top boots, and a blue neckerchief, advanced and seized the hand of the said Pott, and melo-dramatically testified by gestures to the crowd, his ineffaceable obligations to the Eatanswill Gazette.

"Is every thing ready?" said the honourable Samuel Slumkey to Mr. Perker.

"Every thing, my dear sir," was the little man's reply.

"Nothing has been omitted, I hope," said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

"Nothing has been left undone, my dear sir—nothing whatever. There are twenty washed men at the street door for you to shake hands with; and six children in arms that you're to pat on the head, and inquire the age of; be particular about the children my dear sir—it has always a great effect, that sort of thing."

"I'll take care," said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

"And, perhaps, my dear sir—" said the cautious little man, "perhaps if you *could*—I don't mean to say it's indispensable—but if you *could* manage to kiss one of 'em, it would produce a very great impression on the crowd."

"Wouldn't it have as good an effect if the proposer or seconder did that?" said the honourable Samuel Slumkey.

"Why, I am afraid it wouldn't," replied the agent; "if it were done by yourself, my dear sir, I think it would make you very popular."

"Very well," said the honourable Samuel Slumkey with a resigned air, "then it must be done. That's all."

"Arrange the procession," cried the twenty committee-men.

Amidst the cheers of the assembled throng, the band, and the constables, and the committee-men, and the voters, and the horsemen, and the carriages, took their places—each of the two-horse vehicles being closely packed with as many gentlemen as could manage to stand upright in it; and that assigned to Mr. Perker, containing Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Tupman, Mr. Snodgrass, and about half a dozen of the committee besides.

There was a moment of awful suspense as the procession waited for the honourable Samuel Slumkey to step into his carriage. Suddenly the crowd set up a great cheering.

"He has come out," said little Mr. Perker, greatly excited; the more so as their position did not enable them to see what was going forward.

Another cheer, much louder.

"He has shaken hands with the men," cried the little agent.

Another cheer, far more vehement.

"He has patted the babes on the head," said Mr. Perker, trembling with anxiety.

A roar of applause that rent the air.

"He has kissed one of 'em!" exclaimed the delighted little man.

A second roar.

"He has kissed another," gasped the excited manager.

A third roar.

"He's kissing 'em all!" screamed the enthusiastic little gentleman. And hailed by the deafening shouts of the multitude, the procession moved on.

How or by what means it became mixed up with the other procession, and how it was ever extricated from the confusion consequent thereupon, is more than we can undertake to describe, inasmuch as Mr. Pickwick's hat was knocked over his eyes, nose,

and mouth, by one poke of a Buff flag staff, very early in the proceedings. He describes himself as being surrounded on every side, when he could catch a glimpse of the scene. by angry and ferocious countenances, by a vast cloud of dust, and by a dense crowd of combatants. He represents himself as being forced from the carriage by some unseen power, and being personally engaged in a pugilistic encounter; but with whom, or how, or why, he is wholly unable to state. He then felt himself forced up some wooden steps by the persons from behind: and on removing his hat, found himself surrounded by his friends, in the very front of the left hand side of the hustings. The right was reserved for the Buff party, and the centre for the mayor and his officers;—one of whom—the fat crier of Eatanswill—was ringing an enormous bell, by way of commanding silence, while Mr. Horatio Fizkin, and the Honourable Samuel Slumkey, with their hands upon their hearts, were bowing with the utmost affability to the troubled sea of heads that inundated the open space in front; and from whence arose a storm of groans, and shouts, and yells, and hootings, that would have done honour to an earthquake.

"There's Winkle," said Mr. Tupman, pulling his friend by the sleeve.

"Where?" said Mr. Pickwick, putting on his spectacles, which he had fortunately kept in his pocket hitherto.

"There," said Mr. Tupman, "on the top of that house." And there sure enough, in the leaden gutter of a tiled roof, were Mr. Winkle and Mrs. Pott, comfortably seated in a couple of chairs, waving their handkerchiefs in token of recognition—a compliment which Mr. Pickwick returned by kissing his hand to the lady.

The proceedings had not yet commenced; and as an inactive crowd is generally disposed to be jocose,

this very innocent action was sufficient to awaken their facetiousness.

"Oh you wicked old rascal," cried one voice, "looking arter the girls, are you?"

"Oh! you wenerable sinner," cried another.

"Putting on his spectacles to look at a married 'ooman!" said a third.

"I see him a vinkin' at her, with his vicked old eye," shouted a fourth.

"Look arter your wife, Pott," bellowed a fifth; —and then there was a roar of laughter.

As these taunts were accompanied with invidious comparisons between Mr. Pickwick and an aged ram, and several witticisms of the like nature; and as they moreover rather tended to convey reflections upon the honour of an innocent lady, Mr. Pickwick's indignation was excessive; but as silence was proclaimed at the moment, he contented himself by scorching the mob with a look of pity for their misguided minds, at which they laughed more boisterously than ever.

"Silence," roared the mayor's attendants.

"Whiffin, proclaim silence," said the Mayor, with an air of pomp befitting his lofty station. In obedience to this command the crier performed another concerto on the bell, whereupon a gentleman in the crowd called out "muffins;" which occasioned another laugh.

"Gentlemen," said the Mayor, at as loud a pitch as he could possibly force his voice to, "Gentlemen. Brother electors of the Borough of Eatanswill. We are met here to-day, for the purpose of choosing a representative in the room of our late—"

Here the Mayor was interrupted by a voice in the crowd.

"Suc-cess to the Mayor!" cried the voice, "and may he never desert the nail and sarspan business, as he got his money by."

This allusion to the professional pursuits of the orator was received with a storm of delight, which, with a bell-accompaniment rendered the remainder of his speech inaudible, with the exception of the concluding sentence, in which he thanked the meeting for the patient attention with which they had heard him throughout,—an expression of gratitude which elicited another burst of mirth, of about a quarter of an hour's duration.

Next, a tall thin gentleman, in a very stiff white neckerchief, after being repeatedly desired by the crowd to "send a boy home, to ask whether he hadn't left his woice under the pillow," begged to nominate a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament. And when he said it was Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, the Fizkinites applauded and the Slumkeyites groaned, so long, and so loudly, that both he and the seconder might have sung comic songs in lieu of speaking without any body's being a bit the wiser.

The friends of Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, having had their innings, a little choleric, pink-faced man stood forward to propose another fit and proper person to represent the electors of Eatanswill in Parliament; and very swimmingly the pink-faced gentleman would have got on, if he had not been rather too choleric to entertain a sufficient perception of the fun of the crowd. But after a very few sentences of figurative eloquence, the pink-faced gentleman got from denouncing those who interrupted him in the mob, to exchanging defiances with the gentlemen on the hustings; whereupon arose an uproar which reduced him to the necessity of expressing his feelings by serious pantomime, which he did, and then left the stage to his seconder, who delivered a written speech of half an hour's length, and wouldn't be stopped, because he had sent it all to

the Eatanswill Gazette, and the Eatanswill Gazette had printed it, every word.

Then Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, near Eatanswill, presented himself for the purpose of addressing the electors; which he no sooner did, than the band employed by the honourable Samuel Slumkey, commenced performing with a power to which their strength in the morning was a trifle; in return for which, the Buff crowd belaboured the head and shoulders of the Blue crowd; on which, the Blue crowd endeavoured to dispossess themselves of their very unpleasant neighbours the Buff crowd; and a scene of struggling, and pushing, and fighting succeeded, to which we can no more do justice than the Mayor could, although he issued imperative orders to twelve constables to seize the ring-leaders, who might amount in number to two hundred and fifty, or thereabouts. At all these encounters Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, and his friends, waxed fierce and furious; until at last Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, begged to ask his opponent, the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, whether that band played by his consent; which question the honourable Samuel Slumkey declining to answer, Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, shook his fist in the countenance of the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, upon which the honourable Samuel Slumkey, his blood being up, defied Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, to mortal combat. At this violation of all known rules and precedents of order, the Mayor commanded another fantasia on the bell, and declared that he would bring before himself, both Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, and the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, and bind them over to keep the peace. Upon this terrific denunciation, the supporters of the two candidates interfered, and after the friends of each party had quarrelled in pairs for three-quarters of an hour, Ho-

ratio Fizkin, Esquire, touched his hat to the honourable Samuel Slumkey: the honourable Samuel Slumkey touched his to Horatio Fizkin, Esquire: the band was stopped, the crowd were partially quieted, and Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, was permitted to proceed.

The speeches of the two candidates, though differing in every other respect, afforded a beautiful tribute to the merit and high worth of the electors of Eatanswill. Both expressed their opinion that a more independent, a more enlightened, a more public-spirited, a more noble-minded, a more disinterested set of men than those who had promised to vote for him, never existed on earth; each darkly hinted his suspicions that the electors in the opposite interest had certain swinish and besotted infirmities which rendered them unfit for the exercise of the important duties they were called upon to discharge. Fizkin expressed his readiness to do any thing he was wanted; Slumkey his determination to do nothing that was asked of him. Both said, that the trade, the manufactures, the commerce, the prosperity of Eatanswill, would ever be dearer to their hearts than any earthly object; and each had it in his power to state, with the utmost confidence, that he was the man who would eventually be returned.

There was a show of hands; the Mayor decided in favour of the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall. Horatio Fizkin, Esquire, of Fizkin Lodge, demanded a poll, and a poll was fixed accordingly. Then a vote of thanks was moved to the Mayor for his able conduct in the chair; and the Mayor devoutly wishing that he had had a chair to display his able conduct in (for he had been standing during the whole proceedings) returned thanks. The processions re-formed, the carriages rolled slowly through the crowd, and its members screeched and shouted after them as their feelings or caprice dictated.

During the whole time of the polling, the town was in a perpetual fever of excitement. Every thing was conducted on the most liberal and delightful scale. Exciseable articles were remarkably cheap at all the public houses; and spring vans paraded the streets for the accommodation of voters who were seized with any temporary dizziness in the head—an epidemic which prevailed among the electors, during the contest, to a most alarming extent, and under the influence of which they might frequently be seen lying on the pavements in a state of utter insensibility. A small body of electors remained unpolled on the very last day. They were calculating and reflecting persons, who had not yet been convinced by the arguments of either party, although they had had frequent conferences with each. One hour before the close of the poll, Mr. Perker solicited the honour of a private interview with these intelligent, these noble, these patriotic men. It was granted. His arguments were brief, but satisfactory. They went in a body to the poll; and when they returned, the honourable Samuel Slumkey, of Slumkey Hall, was returned also.

CHAPTER XIV.

COMPRISING A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY AT THE PEACOCK ASSEMBLED; AND A TALE TOLD BY A BAGMAN.

It is pleasant to turn from contemplating the strife and turmoil of political existence, to the peaceful repose of private life. Although in reality no great partisan of either side, Mr. Pickwick was sufficiently fired with Mr Pott's enthusiasm, to apply his whole time and attention to the proceedings, of which the last chapter affords a description compiled from his own memoranda. Nor while he was thus occupied was Mr. Winkle idle, his whole time being devoted to pleasant walks and short country excursions with Mrs. Pott, who never failed, when such an opportunity presented itself, to seek some relief from the tedious monotony she so constantly complained of. The two gentlemen being thus completely domesticated in the Editor's house, Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were in a great measure cast upon their own resources. Taking but little interest in public affairs, they beguiled their time chiefly with such amusements as the Peacock afforded, which were limited to a bagatelle-board in the first floor, and a sequestered skittle-ground in the back yard. In the science and nicety of both these recreations, which are far more abstruse than ordinary men suppose, they were gradually initiated

by Mr. Weller, who possessed a perfect knowledge of such pastimes. Thus, notwithstanding that they were in a great measure deprived of the comfort and advantage of Mr. Pickwick's society, they were still enabled to beguile the time, and to prevent its hanging heavily on their hands.

It was in the evening, however, that the Peacock presented attractions which enabled the two friends to resist. even the invitations of the talented, though prosily inclined, Mr. Pott. It was in the evening that the "commercial room" was filled with a social circle, whose characters and manners it was the delight of Mr. Tupman to observe; whose sayings and doings it was the habit of Mr. Snodgrass to note down.

Most people know what sort of places commercial rooms usually are. That of the Peacock differed in no material respect from the generality of such apartments; that is to say, it was a large bare-looking room, the furniture of which no doubt had been better when it was newer, with a spacious table in the centre, and a variety of smaller dittos in the corners; an extensive assortment of variously shaped chairs, and an old Turkey carpet, bearing about the same relative proportion to the size of the room, as a lady's pocket-handkerchief might to the floor of a watch-box. The walls were garnished with one or two large maps: and several weather-beaten rough great coats, with complicated capes, dangled from a long row of pegs in one corner. The mantle-shelf was ornamented with a wooden-inkstand, containing one stump of a pen and half a wafer, a road-book and directory, a county history, minus the cover, and the mortal remains of a trout in a glass coffin. The atmosphere was redolent of tobacco-smoke, the fumes of which had communicated a rather dingy hue to the whole room, and more especially to the dusty red curtains which shaded the windows. On the sideboard, a variety

of miscellaneous articles were huddled together, the most conspicuous of which were some very cloudy fish-sauce cruets, a couple of driving-boxes, two or three whips, and as many travelling shawls, a tray of knives and forks, and the mustard.

Here it was that Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were seated on the evening after the conclusion of the election, with several other temporary inmates of the house, smoking and drinking.

"Well, gents," said a stout, hale personage of about forty, with only one eye—a very bright black eye—which twinkled with a roguish expression of fun and good humour, "Our noble selves, gents. I always propose that toast to the company, and drink Mary to myself. Eh, Mary?"

"Get along with you, you wretch," said the hand-maiden, obviously not ill-pleased with the compliment, however.

"Don't go away, Mary," said the black-eyed man.

"Let me alone, imperence," said the young lady.

"Never mind," said the one-eyed man, calling after the girl as she left the room. "I'll step out by and by, Mary. Keep your spirits up, dear." Here he went through the not very difficult process of winking upon the company with his solitary eye, to the enthusiastic delight of an elderly personage with a dirty face and a clay pipe.

"Rum creeters is women," said the dirty-faced man, after a pause.

"Ah! no mistake about that," said a very red-faced man, behind a cigar.

After this little bit of philosophy there was another pause.

"There's rummer things than women in this world though, mind you," said the man with the black eye, slowly filling a large Dutch pipe, with a most capacious bowl.

"Are you married?" inquired the dirty-faced man.

"Can't say I am."

"I thought not." Here the dirty-faced man fell into extasies of mirth at his own retort, in which he was joined by a man of bland voice and placid countenance, who always made it a point to agree with every body.

"Women after all, gentlemen," said the enthusiastic Mr. Snodgrass, "are the great props and comforts of our existence."

"So they are," said the placid gentleman.

"When they're in a good humour," interposed the dirty-faced man.

"And that's very true," said the placid one.

"I repudiate that qualification," said Mr. Snodgrass, whose thoughts were fast reverting to Emily Wardle, "I repudiate it with disdain—with indignation. Show me the man who says any thing against women, as women, and I boldly declare he is not a man." And Mr. Snodgrass took his cigar from his mouth, and struck the table violently with his clenched fist.

"That's good sound argument," said the placid man.

"Containing a position which I deny," interrupted he of the dirty countenance.

"And there's certainly a very great deal of truth in what you observe too, sir," said the placid gentleman.

"Your health, sir," said the bagman with the lonely eye, bestowing an approving nod on Mr. Snodgrass.

Mr. Snodgrass acknowledged the compliment.

"I always like to hear a good argument," continued the bagman, "a sharp one, like this; it's very improving; but this little argument about women brought to my mind a story I have heard an old uncle of mine tell, the recollection of which, just now, made me say there were rummer things than women to be met with, sometimes."

"I should like to hear that same story," said the red-faced man with the cigar.

"Should you?" was the only reply of the bagman, who continued to smoke with great vehemence.

"So should I," said Mr. Tupman, speaking for the first time. He was always anxious to increase his stock of experience.

"Should *you?* Well then, I'll tell it. No, I won't. I know you won't believe it," said the man with the roguish eye, making that organ look more roguish than ever.

"If you say it's true, of course I shall," said Mr. Tupman.

"Well, upon that understanding I'll tell it," replied the traveller. "Did you ever hear of the great commercial house of Bilson and Slum? But it doesn't matter though, whether you did or not, because they retired from business long since. It's eighty years ago, since the circumstance happened to a traveller for that house, but he was a particular friend of my uncle's: and my uncle told the story to me. It's a queer name; but he used to call it

THE BAGMAN'S STORY,

and he used to tell it, something in this way.

"One winter's evening, about five o'clock, just as it began to grow dusk, a man in a gig might have been seen urging his tired horse along the road which leads across Marlborough Downs, in the direction of Bristol. I say he might have been seen, and I have no doubt he would have been, if any body but a blind man had happened to pass that way; but the weather was so bad, and the night so cold and wet, that nothing was out but the water, and so the traveller jogged along in the middle of the road, lonesome and dreary enough. If any bagman

of that day could have caught sight of the little neck-or-nothing sort of gig, with a clay-coloured body and red wheels, and the vixenish ill-tempered, fast-going bay mare, that looked like a cross between a butcher's horse and a twopenny post-office pony, he would have known at once, that this traveller could have been no other than Tom Smart, of the great house of Bilson and Slum, Cateaton Street, City. However, as there was no bagman to look on, nobody knew any thing at all about the matter; and so Tom Smart and his clay-coloured gig with the red wheels, and the vixenish mare with the fast pace, went on together, keeping the secret among them, and nobody was a bit the wiser.

"There are many pleasanter places even in this dreary world, than Marlborough Downs when it blows hard; and if you throw in beside, a gloomy winter's evening, a miry and sloppy road and a pelting fall of heavy rain, and try the effect, by way of experiment, in your own proper person, you will experience the full force of this observation.

"The wind blew—not up the road or down it, though that's bad enough, but sheer across it, sending the rain slanting down like the lines they used to rule in the copy books at school, to make the boys slope well. For a moment it would die away, and the traveller would begin to delude himself into the belief that, exhausted with its previous fury, it had quietly lain itself down to rest, when whoo! he would hear it growling and whistling in the distance, and on it would come rushing over the hill-tops, and sweeping along the plain, gathering sound and strength as it drew nearer, until it dashed with a heavy gust against horse and man, driving the sharp rain into their ears, and its cold damp breath into their very bones; and past them it would scour, far, far away, with a stunning roar, as if in ridicule of their weakness, and triumphant in the consciousness of its own strength and power.

"The bay mare splashed away through the mud and water with drooping ears, now and then tossing her head as if to express her disgust at this very ungentlemanly behaviour of the elements, but keeping a good pace notwithstanding, until a gust of wind, more furious than any that had yet assailed them, caused her to stop suddenly, and plant her four feet firmly against the ground, to prevent her being blown over. It's a special mercy that she did this, for if she *had* been blown over, the vixenish mare was so light, and the gig was so light, and Tom Smart such a light weight into the bargain, that they must infallibly have all gone rolling over and over together, until they reached the confines of earth, or until the wind fell; and in either case the probability is, that neither the vixenish mare, nor the clay-coloured gig with red wheels, nor Tom Smart, would ever have been fit for service again.

"'Well,' says Tom Smart, (Tom sometimes had an unpleasant knack of swearing,) 'if this ain't pleasant, blow me."

"You'll very likely ask me, why, as Tom Smart had been pretty well blown already, he expressed this wish to be submitted to the same process again. I can't say—all I know is, that Tom Smart said so—or at least he always told my uncle he said so, and it's just the same thing.

"'Blow me,' says Tom Smart; and the mare neighed as if she were precisely of the same opinion.

"'Cheer up, old girl,' said Tom, patting the bay mare on the neck with the end of his whip. 'It won't do pushing on, such a night as this; the first house we come to we'll put up at, so the faster you go the sooner it's over. Soho, old girl—gently—gently."

"Whether the vixenish mare was sufficiently well acquainted with the tones of Tom's voice to comprehend his meaning, or whether she found it colder standing still than moving on, of course I can't say.

But I can say that Tom had no sooner finished speaking, than she pricked up her ears, and started forward at a speed which made the clay-coloured gig rattle till you would have supposed every one of the red spokes was going to fly out on the turf of Marlborough Downs; and even Tom, whip as he was, couldn't stop or check her pace, until she drew up of her own accord, before a road-side inn on the right hand side of the way, about half a quarter of a mile from the end of the Downs.

"Tom cast a hasty glance at the upper part of the house as he threw the reins to the hostler, and stuck the whip in the box. It was a strange old place, built of a kind of shingle, inlaid, as it were, with cross-beams, with gable-topped windows projecting completely over the pathway, and a low door with a dark porch, and a couple of steep steps leading down into the house, instead of the modern fashion of half a dozen shallow ones, leading up to it. It was a comfortable-looking place though, for there was a strong cheerful light in the bar-window, which shed a bright ray across the road, and even lighted up the hedge on the other side; and there was a red flickering light in the opposite window, one moment, faintly but discernible, and the next gleaming strongly through the drawn curtains, which intimated that a rousing fire was blazing within. Marking these little evidences with the eye of an experienced traveller, Tom dismounted with as much agility as his half-frozen limbs would permit, and entered the house.

"In less than five minutes' time, Tom was ensconced in the room opposite the bar—the very room where he had imagined the fire blazing—before a substantial matter-of-fact roaring fire, composed of something short of a bushel of coals, and wood enough to make half a dozen decent gooseberry-bushes, piled half way up the chimney, and roaring and crackling with a soundthat of itself would

have warmed the heart of any reasonable man. This was comfortable, but this was not all, for a smartly dressed girl, with a bright eye and a neat ankle, was laying a very clean white cloth on the table; and as Tom sat with his slippered feet on the fender, and his back to the open door, he saw a charming prospect of the bar reflected in the glass over the chimney piece, with delightful rows of green bottles and gold labels, together with jars of pickles and preserves, and cheeses and boiled hams, and rounds of beef, arranged on shelves in the most tempting and delicious array. Well, this was comfortable too; but even this was not all—for in the bar, seated at tea at the nicest possible little table, drawn close up before the brightest possible little fire, was a buxom widow of somewhere about eight and forty or thereabouts, with a face as comfortable as the bar, who was evidently the landlady of the house, and the supreme ruler over all these agreeable possessions. There was only one drawback to the beauty of the whole picture, and that was a tall man—a very tall man—in a brown coat and bright basket buttons, and black whiskers, and wavy black hair, who was seated at tea with the widow, and who it required no great penetration to discover was in a fair way of persuading her to be a widow no longer, but to confer upon him the privilege of sitting down in that bar, for and during the whole remainder of the term of his natural life.

"Tom Smart was by no means of an irritable or envious disposition, but somehow or other the tall man with the brown coat and the bright basket buttons did rouse what little gall he had in his composition, and did make him feel extremely indignant, the more especially as he could now and then observe, from his seat before the glass, certain little affectionate familiarities passing between the tall man and the widow, which sufficiently denoted that the tall man was as high in favour as he was

in size. Tom was fond of hot punch—I may venture to say he was *very* fond of hot punch—and after he had seen the vixenish mare well fed and well littered down, and eaten every bit of the nice little hot dinner which the widow tossed up for him with her own hands, he just ordered a tumbler of it, by way of experiment. Now if there was one thing in the whole range of domestic art, which the widow could manufacture better than another, it was this identical article; and the first tumbler was adapted to Tom Smart's taste with such peculiar nicety, that he ordered a second with the least possible delay. Hot punch is a pleasant thing, gentlemen—an extremely pleasant thing under any circumstances—but in that snug old parlour, before the roaring fire, with the wind blowing outside till every timber in the old house creaked again, Tom Smart found it perfectly delightful. He ordered another tumbler, and then another—I am not quite certain whether he didn't order another after that—but the more he drank of the hot punch the more he thought of the tall man.

"'Confound his impudence,' said Tom Smart to himself, 'what business has he in that snug bar? Such an ugly villain too!' said Tom. 'If the widow had any taste, she might surely pick up some better fellow than that.' Here Tom's eye wandered from the glass on the chimney-piece, to the glass on the table, and as he felt himself becoming gradually sentimental, he emptied the fourth tumbler of punch and ordered a fifth.

"Tom Smart, gentlemen, had always been very much attached to the public line. It had long been his ambition to stand in a bar of his own, in a green coat, knee-cords, and tops. He had a great notion of taking the chair at convivial dinners, and he had often thought how well he could preside in a room of his own in the talking way, and what a capital example he could set to his customers in the drink-

ing department. All these things passed rapidly through Tom's mind as he sat drinking the hot punch by the roaring fire, and he felt very justly and properly indignant that the tall man should be in a fair way of keeping such an excellent house, while he, Tom Smart, was as far off from it as ever. So, after deliberating over the last two tumblers, whether he hadn't a perfect right to pick a quarrel with the tall man for having contrived to get into the good graces of the buxom widow, Tom Smart at last arrived at the satisfactory conclusion that he was a very ill-used and persecuted individual, and had better go to bed.

"Up a wide and ancient staircase the smart girl preceded Tom, shading the chamber candle with her hand, to protect it from the currents of air which in such a rambling old place might have found plenty of room to disport themselves in, without blowing the candle out, but which did blow it out nevertheless; thus affording Tom's enemies an opportunity of asserting that it was he, and not the wind, who extinguished the candle, and that while he pretended to be blowing it a-light again, he was in fact kissing the girl. Be this as it may, another light was obtained, and Tom was conducted through a maze of rooms, and a labyrinth of passages, to the apartment which had been prepared for his reception, where the girl bid him good night, and left him alone.

"It was a good large room with big closets, and a bed which might have served for a whole boarding-school, to say nothing of a couple of oaken presses that would have held the baggage of a small army; but what struck Tom's fancy most, was a strange, grim-looking, high-backed chair, carved in the most fantastic manner, with a flowered damask cushion, and the round knobs at the bottom of the legs carefully tied up in red cloth, as if it had got the gout in its toes. Of any other queer chair, Tom would only have thought it *was* a queer chair, and

there would have been an end of the matter; but there was something about this particular chair, and yet he couldn't tell what it was, so odd and so unlike any other piece of furniture he had ever seen, that it seemed to fascinate him. He sat down before the fire, and stared at the old chair for half an hour:—It was such a strange old thing, he couldn't take his eyes off it.

"'Well,' said Tom, slowly undressing himself, and staring at the old chair all the while, which stood with a mysterious aspect by the bed-side, 'I never saw such a rum concern as that in my days. Very odd,' said Tom, who had got rather sage with the hot punch, 'Very odd.' Tom shook his head with an air of profound wisdom, and looked at the chair again. He couldn't make any thing of it though, so he got into bed, covered himself up warm, and fell asleep.

"In about half an hour, Tom woke up with a start, from a confused dream of tall men and tumblers of punch: and the first object that presented itself to his waking imagination was the queer chair.

"'I won't look at it any more," said Tom to himself, and he squeezed his eyelids together, and tried to persuade himself he was going to sleep again. No use; nothing but queer chairs danced before his eyes, kicking up their legs, jumping over each other's backs, and playing all kinds of antics.

"'I may as well see one real chair, as two or three complete sets of false ones,' said Tom, bringing out his head from under the bed-clothes. There it was, plainly discernible by the light of the fire, looking as provoking as ever.

"Tom gazed at the chair; and suddenly as he looked at it, a most extraordinary change seemed to come over it. The carving of the back gradually assumed the lineaments and expression of an old, shrivelled human face; the damask cushion became

an antique, flapped waistcoat; the round knobs grew into a couple of feet, encased in red cloth slippers, and the whole chair looked like a very ugly old man, of the previous century, with his arms a-kimbo. Tom sat up in bed, and rubbed his eyes to dispel the illusion. No. The chair was an ugly old gentleman; and what was more, he was winking at Tom Smart.

"Tom was naturally a headlong, careless sort of dog, and he had had five tumblers of hot punch into the bargain; so, although he was a little startled at first, he began to grow rather indignant when he saw the old gentleman winking and leering at him with such an impudent air. At length he resolved that he wouldn't stand it; and as the old face still kept winking away as fast as ever, Tom said in a very angry tone—

"'What the d—l are you winking at me for?'

"'Because I like it, Tom Smart,' said the chair; or the old gentleman, whichever you like to call him. He stopped winking though, when Tom spoke, and began grinning like a superannuated monkey.

"'How do you know my name, old nut-cracker face?' inquired Tom Smart, rather staggered;—though he pretended to carry it off so well.

"'Come, come, Tom,' said the old gentleman, 'that's not the way to address solid Spanish Mahogany. You couldn't treat me with less respect if I was veneered.' When the old gentleman said this, he looked so fierce that Tom began to grow frightened.

"'I didn't mean to treat you with any disrespect, sir,' said Tom in a much humbler tone than he had spoken in at first.

"'Well, well,' said the old fellow, 'perhaps not—perhaps not. Tom—'

"'Sir—'

"'I know every thing about you, Tom; every thing. You're very poor, Tom.'

"'I certainly am,' said Tom Smart. 'But how came you to know that?'

"'Never mind that,' said the old gentleman; 'you're much too fond of punch, Tom.'

"Tom Smart was just on the point of protesting that he hadn't tasted a drop since his last birth-day, but when his eyes encountered that of the old gentleman, he looked so knowing that Tom blushed, and was silent.

"'Tom,' said the old gentleman, 'the widow's a fine woman—a remarkably fine woman—eh, Tom?' Here the old fellow screwed up his eyes, cocked up one of his wasted little legs, and looked altogether so unpleasantly amorous, that Tom was quite disgusted with the levity of his behaviour;—at his time of life too!

"'I am her guardian, Tom,' said the old gentleman.

"'Are you?' inquired Tom Smart.

"'I knew her mother, Tom,' said the old fellow; 'and her grandmother. She was very fond of me—made me this waistcoat, Tom.'

"'Did she?' said Tom Smart.

"'And these shoes,' said the old fellow, lifting up one of the red cloth mufflers; 'but don't mention it, Tom. I shouldn't like to have it known that she was so much attached to me. It might occasion some unpleasantness in the family.' When the old rascal said this, he looked so extremely impertinent, that, as Tom Smart afterwards declared, he could have sat upon him without remorse.

"'I have been a great favourite among the women in my time, Tom,' said the profligate old debauchee; 'hundreds of fine women have sat in my lap for hours together. What do you think of that, you dog, eh?' The old gentleman was proceeding to recount some other exploits of his youth, when he was seized with such a violent fit of creaking that he was unable to proceed.

"'Just serves you right, old boy,' thought Tom Smart; but he didn't say any thing.

"'Ah!' said the old fellow, 'I am a good deal troubled with this now. I am getting old, Tom, and have lost nearly all my rails. I have had an operation performed, too—a small piece let into my back—and I found it a severe trial, Tom.'

"'I dare say you did, sir,' said Tom Smart.

"'However,' said the old gentleman, 'that's not the point. Tom, I want you to marry the widow.'

"'Me, sir!' said Tom.

"'You,' said the old gentleman.

"'Bless your reverend locks,' said Tom, (he had a few scattered horse-hairs left)—"'bless your reverend locks, she wouldn't have me.' And Tom sighed involuntarily, as he thought of the bar.

"'Wouldn't she?' said the old gentleman, firmly.

"'No, no,' said Tom; 'there's somebody else in the wind. A tall man—a confoundedly tall man—with black whiskers.'

"'Tom,' said the old gentleman; 'she will never have him.'

"Won't she?' said Tom. 'If you stood in the bar, old gentleman, you'd tell another story.'

"'Pooh, pooh,' said the old gentleman. 'I know all about that.'

"'About what?' said Tom.

"'The kissing behind the door, and all that sort of thing, Tom,' said the old gentleman; and here he gave another impudent look, which made Tom very wroth, because, as you all know, gentlemen, to hear an old fellow, who ought to know better, talking about these things, is very unpleasant—nothing more so.

"'I know all about that, Tom,' said the old gentleman. 'I have seen it done very often in my time, Tom, between more people than I should like to mention to you; but it never came to any thing after all.'

"'You must have seen some queer things,' said Tom with an inquisitive look.

"'You may say that, Tom,' replied the old fellow, with a very complicated wink. 'I am the last of my family, Tom,' said the old gentleman, with a melancholy sigh.

"'Was it a large one?' inquired Tom Smart.

"'There were twelve of us, Tom,' said the old gentleman; 'fine straight-backed, handsome fellows as you'd wish to see. None of your modern abortions—all with arms, and with a degree of polish, though I say it that should not, which it would have done your heart good to behold.'

"'And what's become of the others, sir?' asked Tom Smart.

"The old gentleman applied his elbow to his eye as he replied, 'Gone, Tom, gone. We had hard service, Tom, and they hadn't all my constitution. They got rheumatic about the legs and arms, and went into kitchens and other hospitals: and one of 'em, with long service and hard usage, positively lost his senses:—he got so crazy that he was obliged to be burnt. Shocking thing that, Tom.'

"'Dreadful!' said Tom Smart.

"The old fellow paused for a few minutes, apparently struggling with his feelings of emotion, and then said,

"'However, Tom, I am wandering from the point. This tall man, Tom, is a rascally adventurer. The moment he married the widow, he would sell of all the furniture, and run away. What would be the consequence? She would be deserted and reduced to ruin, and I should catch my death of cold in some broker's shop.

"'Yes, but—'

"'Don't interrupt me,' said the old gentleman. 'Of you, Tom, I entertain a very different opinion; for I well know that if you once settled yourself in a public house, you would never leave it, as

long as there was any thing to drink within its walls."

"'I am very much obliged to you for your good opinion, sir,' said Tom Smart.

"'Therefore,' resumed the old gentleman, in a dictatorial tone; 'you shall have her, and he shall not.'

"'What is to prevent it?' said Tom Smart, eagerly.

"'This disclosure,' replied the old gentleman; 'he is already married.'

"'How can I prove it?' said Tom, starting half out of bed.

"The old gentleman untucked his arm from his side, and having pointed to one of the oaken presses, immediately replaced it, in its old position.

"'He little thinks,' said the old gentleman, 'that in the right hand pocket of a pair of trousers in that press, he has left a letter, entreating him to return to his disconsolate wife, with six—mark me, Tom—six babes, and all of them small ones.'

"As the old gentleman solemnly uttered these words, his features grew less and less distinct, and his figure more shadowy. A film came over Tom Smart's eyes. The old man seemed gradually blending into the chair, the damask waistcoat to resolve into a cushion, the red slippers to shrink into little red cloth bags. The light faded gently away; and Tom Smart fell back on his pillow, and dropped asleep.

"Morning roused Tom from the lethargic slumber, into which he had fallen on the disappearance of the old man. He sat up in bed, and for some minutes vainly endeavoured to recall the events of the preceding night. Suddenly they rushed upon him. He looked at the chair, it was a fantastic and grim-looking piece of furniture, certainly, but it must have been a remarkably ingenious and lively

imagination, that could have discovered any resemblance between it and an old man.

"'How are you, old boy?' said Tom. He was bolder in the day-light—most men are.

"The chair remained motionless, and spoke not a word.

"'Miserable morning,' said Tom. No. The chair would not be drawn into conversation.

"'Which press did you point to?—you can tell me that,' said Tom. Not a word, gentlemen, the chair would say.

"'It's not much trouble to open it, any how,' said Tom, getting out of bed very deliberately. He walked up to one of the presses. The key was in the lock; he turned it, and opened the door. There *was* a pair of trousers there. He put his hand into the pocket, and drew forth the identical letter the old gentleman had described!

"'Queer sort of thing, this,' said Tom Smart; looking first at the chair and then at the press, and then at the letter, and then at the chair again. 'Very queer,' said Tom. But as there was nothing in either to lessen the queerness, he thought he might as well dress himself, and settle the tall man's business at once—just to put him out of his misery.

"Tom surveyed the rooms he passed through, on his way down stairs, with the scrutinizing eye of a landlord; thinking it not impossible, that before long, they and their contents would be his property. The tall man was standing in the snug little bar, with his hands behind him, quite at home. He grinned vacantly at Tom. A casual observer might have supposed he did it, only to show his white teeth; but Tom Smart thought a consciousness of triumph was passing through the place where the tall man's mind would have been, if he had had any. Tom laughed in his face; and summoned the landlady.

"'Good morning, ma'am,' said Tom Smart, closing the door of the little parlour as the widow entered.

"'Good morning, sir,' said the widow. 'What will you take for breakfast, sir?'

"Tom was thinking how he should open the case, so he made no answer.

"'There's a very nice ham,' said the widow, 'and a beautiful cold larded fowl. Shall I send 'em in, sir?'

"These words roused Tom from his reflections. His admiration of the widow increased as she spoke. Thoughtful creature! Comfortable provider!

"'Who is that gentleman in the bar, ma'am?' inquired Tom.

"'His name is Jinkins, sir,' said the widow, slightly blushing.

"'He's a tall man,' said Tom.

"'He is a very fine man, sir,' replied the widow, 'and a very nice gentleman.'

"'Ah!' said Tom.

"'Is there any thing more you want, sir?' inquired the widow, rather puzzled by Tom's manner.

"'Why, yes,' said Tom. 'My dear ma'am, will you have the kindness to sit down for one moment?'

"The widow looked much amazed, but she sat down, and Tom sat down too, close beside her. I don't know how it happened, gentlemen—indeed my uncle used to tell me that Tom Smart said *he* didn't know how it happened either—but somehow or other the palm of Tom's hand fell upon the back of the widow's hand, and remained there while he spoke.

"'My dear ma'am,' said Tom Smart—he had always a great notion of committing the amiable—'My dear ma'am, you deserve a very excellent husband;—you do indeed.'

"'Why, sir!' said the widow—as well she might; Tom's mode of commencing the conversation being

rather unusual, not to say startling, the fact of his never having set eyes upon her before the previous night, being taken into consideration. 'Why, sir!'

"'I scorn to flatter, my dear ma'am,' said Tom Smart. 'You deserve a very admirable husband, and whoever he is, he'll be a very lucky man.' As Tom said this, his eye involuntarily wandered from the widow's face to the comforts around him.

"The widow looked more puzzled than ever, and made an effort to rise. Tom gently pressed her hand, as if to detain her, and she kept her seat. Widows, gentlemen, are not usually timorous, as my uncle used to say.

"'I am sure I am very much obliged to you, sir, for your good opinion,' said the buxom landlady, half laughing; 'and if ever I marry again'—

"'*If*,' said Tom Smart, looking very shrewdly out at the right hand corner of his left eye. '*If*'—

"'Well,' said the widow, laughing outright this time. '*When* I do, I hope I shall have as good a husband as you describe.'

"'Jinkins to wit,' said Tom.

"'Why, sir!' exclaimed the widow.

"'Oh, don't tell me,' said Tom, 'I know him.'

"'I am sure nobody who knows him, knows any thing bad of him,' said the widow, bridling up at the mysterious air with which Tom had spoken.

"'Hem,' said Tom Smart.

"The widow began to think it was high time to cry, so she took out her handkerchief, and inquired whether Tom wished to insult her, whether he thought it like a gentleman to take away the character of another gentleman behind his back, why, if he had got any thing to say, he didn't say it to the man, like a man, instead of terrifying a poor weak woman in that way; and so forth.

"'I'll say it to him fast enough,' said Tom, 'only I want you to hear it first.'

"'What is it?' inquired the widow, looking intently in Tom's countenance.

"'I'll astonish you,' said Tom, putting his hand in his pocket.

"'If it is, that he wants money,' said the widow, 'I know that already, and you needn't trouble yourself.'

"'Pooh, nonsense, that's nothin',' said Tom Smart; '*I* want money. 'Tan't that.'

"'Oh dear, what can it be?' exclaimed the poor widow.

"'Don't be frightened,' said Tom Smart. He slowly drew forth the letter, and unfolded it. 'You won't scream?' said Tom, doubtfully.

"'No, no,' replied the widow; 'let me see it.'

"'You won't go fainting away, or any of that nonsense?' said Tom.

"'No, no.' returned the widow, hastily.

"'And don't run out, and blow him up,' said Tom, 'because I'll do all that for you; you had better not exert yourself.'

"'Well, well,' said the widow, 'let me see it.'

"'I will,' replied Tom Smart; and, with these words, he placed the letter in the widow's hand.

"Gentlemen, I have heard my uncle say, that Tom Smart said the widow's lamentations, when she heard the disclosure, would have pierced a heart of stone. Tom was certainly very tender-hearted, but they pierced his, to the very core. The widow rocked herself to and fro, and wrung her hands.

"'Oh, the deception and villany of the man!' said the widow.

"'Frightful, my dear ma'am; but compose yourself,' said Tom Smart.

"'Oh, I can't compose myself,' shrieked the widow. 'I shall never find any one else I can love so much!'

"'Oh, yes you will, my dear soul,' said Tom Smart, letting fall a shower of the largest-sized tears, in

pity for the widow's misfortunes. Tom Smart, in the energy of his compassion, had put his arm round the widow's waist; and the widow, in a passion of grief, had clasped Tom's hand. She looked up in Tom's face, and smiled through her tears. Tom looked down in hers, and smiled through his.

"I never could find out, gentleman, whether Tom did or did not kiss the widow at that particular moment. He used to tell my uncle he didn't, but I have my doubts about it. Between ourselves, gentlemen, I rather think he did.

"At all events, Tom kicked the very tall man out at the front door half an hour after, and married the widow a month after. And he used to drive about the country, with the clay coloured gig with the red wheels, and the vixenish mare with the fast pace, till he gave up business many years afterwards, and went to France with his wife; and then the old house was pulled down."

"Will you allow me to ask you," said the inquisitive old gentleman, "what became of the chair?"

"Why," replied the one-eyed bagman, "it was observed to creak very much on the day of the wedding; but Tom Smart couldn't say for certain, whether it was with pleasure or bodily infirmity. He rather thought it was the latter, though, for it never spoke afterwards."

"Every body believed the story, didn't they?" said the dirty-faced man, re-filling his pipe.

"Except Tom's enemies," replied the bagman. "Some of 'em said Tom invented it altogether; and others said he was drunk, and fancied it, and got hold of the wrong trousers by mistake before he went to bed. But nobody ever minded what *they* said."

"Tom Smart said it was all true?"

"Every word."

"And your uncle?"

"Every letter."

"They must have been nice men, both of 'em," said the dirty-faced man.

"Yes, they were," replied the bagman; "very nice men indeed!"

CHAPTER XV.

IN WHICH IS GIVEN A FAITHFUL PORTRAITURE OF TWO DISTINGUISHED PERSONS; AND AN ACCURATE DESCRIPTION OF A PUBLIC BREAKFAST IN THEIR HOUSE AND GROUNDS: WHICH PUBLIC BREAKFAST LEADS TO THE RECOGNITION OF AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE, AND THE COMMENCEMENT OF ANOTHER CHAPTER.

Mr. Pickwick's conscience had been somewhat reproaching him, for his recent neglect of his friends at the Peacock; and he was just on the point of walking forth in quest of them, on the third morning after the election had terminated, when his faithful valet put into his hand a card, on which was engraved the following incription.

Mrs. Leo Hunter.

The Den. Eatanswill.

"Person's a waitin'," said Sam, epigrammatically.

"Does the person want me, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He wants you partickler; and no one else'll do, as the Devil's private secretary said, ven he fetched avay Doctor Faustus," replied Mr. Weller.

"*He.* Is it a gentleman?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"A werry good imitation o'one, if it an't," replied Mr. Weller.

"But this is a lady's card," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Given me by a gen'l'm'n, hows'ever," replied Sam, "and he's a waitin' in the drawing-room—said he'd rather wait all day, than not see you."

Mr. Pickwick on hearing this determination, descended to the drawing-room, where sat a grave man, who started up on his entrance, and said with an air of profound respect—

"Mr. Pickwick, I presume?"

"The same."

"Allow me, sir, the honour of grasping your hand—permit me, sir, to shake it," said the grave man.

"Certainly," said Mr. Pickwick.

The stranger shook the extended hand, and then continued.

"We have heard of your fame, sir. The noise of your antiquarian discussion has reached the ears of Mrs. Leo Hunter—my wife, sir; *I* am *Mr.* Leo Hunter"—the stranger paused, as if he expected that Mr. Pickwick would be overcome by the disclosure; but seeing that he remained perfectly calm, proceeded.

"My wife, sir—Mrs. Leo Hunter—is proud to number among her acquaintance, all those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works and talents. Permit me, sir, to place in a conspicuous part of the list, the name of Mr. Pickwick, and his brother members of the club that derives its name from him."

"I shall be extremely happy to make the acquaintance of such a lady, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"You *shall* make it, sir," said the grave man. "To-morrow morning, sir, we give a public breakfast—a *fête champetre*—to a great number of those who have rendered themselves celebrated by their works and talents. Permit Mrs. Leo Hunter, sir, to have the gratification of seeing you at the Den."

"With great pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Mrs. Leo Hunter has many of these breakfasts, sir," resumed the new acquaintance—"'Feasts of reason, sir, and flows of soul,' as some-body who wrote a sonnet to Mrs. Leo Hunter on her breakfasts, feelingly and originally observed."

"Was *he* celebrated for his works, and talents?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"He was, sir," replied the grave man, "all Mrs. Leo Hunter's acquaintance are; it is her ambition, sir, to have no other acquaintance."

"It is a very noble ambition," said Mr. Pickwick.

"When I inform Mrs. Leo Hunter, that that remark fell from *your* lips, sir, she will indeed be proud," said the grave man. "You have a gentleman in your train, who has produced some beautiful little poems, I think, sir."

"My friend Mr. Snodgrass has a great taste for poetry," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"So has Mrs. Leo Hunter, sir. She dotes on poetry, sir. She adores it; I may say that her whole soul and mind are wound up and entwined with it. She has produced some delightful pieces, herself, sir. You may have met with her 'Ode to an expiring Frog,' sir.

"I don't think I have," said Mr. Pickwick.

"You astonish me, sir," said Mr. Leo Hunter. "It created an immense sensation. It was signed with an 'L' and eight stars and appeared originally in a Lady's Magazine. It commenced.

"Can I view thee panting, lying
On thy stomach, without sighing;
Can I unmoved see thee dying
On a log,
Expiring Frog!"

"Beautiful!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fine," said Mr. Leo Hunter, "so simple."

"Very," said Mr. Pickwick.

"The next verse is still more touching. Shall I repeat it?"

"If you please," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It runs thus," said the grave man, still more gravely.

> "Say have fiends in shape of boys,
> With wild halloo, and brutal noise,
> Hunted thee from marshy joys,
> With a dog,
> Expiring frog?"

"Finely expressed," said Mr. Pickwick.

"All point, sir, all point," said Mr. Leo Hunter, "but you shall hear Mrs. Leo Hunter repeat it. *She* can do justice to it, sir. She will repeat it, in character, sir, to-morrow morning."

"In character!"

"As Minerva. But I forgot—it's a fancy dress dejeune."

"Dear me," said Mr. Pickwick, glancing at his own figure—"I can't possibly"—

"Can't, sir; can't!" exclaimed Mr. Leo Hunter. "Solomon Lucas, the Jew in the High Street, has thousands of fancy dresses. Consider, sir, how many appropriate characters are open for your selection. Plato, Zeno, Epicurus, Pythagoras—all founders of clubs."

"I know that," said Mr. Pickwick, "but as I cannot put myself in competition with those great men, I cannot presume to wear their dresses."

The grave man considered deeply, for a few seconds, and then said,

"On reflection, sir, I don't know whether it would not afford Mrs. Leo Hunter, greater pleasure, if her guests saw a gentleman of your celebrity in his own costume, rather than in an assumed one. I may venture to promise an exception in your case, sir—yes, I am quite certain that on behalf of Mrs. Leo Hunter, I may venture to do so."

"In that case," said Mr. Pickwick, "I shall have great pleasure in coming."

"But I waste your time, sir," said the grave man, as if suddenly recollecting himself. "I know its value, sir. I will not detain you. I may tell Mrs. Leo Hunter, then, that she may confidently expect you and your distinguished friends? Good morning, sir, I am proud to have beheld so eminent a personage—not a step, sir; not a word." And without giving Mr. Pickwick time to offer remonstrance or denial, Mr. Leo Hunter stalked gravely away.

Mr. Pickwick took up his hat, and repaired to the Peacock, but Mr. Winkle had conveyed the intelligence of the fancy ball there, before him.

"Mrs. Pott's going," were the first words with which he saluted his leader.

"Is she?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"As Apollo," replied Mr. Winkle. "Only Pott objects to the tunic."

"He is right. He is quite right," said Mr. Pickwick emphatically.

"Yes;—so she's going to wear a white satin gown with gold spangles."

"They'll hardly know what she's meant for; will they?" inquired Mr. Snodgrass.

"Of course they will," replied Mr. Winkle, indignantly. "They'll see her lyre, won't they?"

"True; I forgot that," said Mr. Snodgrass.

"I shall go as a bandit," interposed Mr. Tupman.

"What?" said Mr. Pickwick, with a sudden start.

"As a bandit," repeated Mr. Tupman, mildly.

"You don't mean to say," said Mr. Pickwick, gazing with solemn sternness at his friend, "You don't mean to say, Mr. Tupman, that it is your intention to put yourself into a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail?"

"Such *is* my intention, sir," replied Mr. Tupman, warmly. "And why not, sir?"

"Because sir," said Mr. Pickwick, considerably excited—"Because you are too old, sir."

"Too old?" exclaimed Mr. Tupman.

"And if any farther ground of objection be wanting," continued Mr. Pickwick, "you are too fat, sir."

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman, his face suffused with a crimson glow, "this is an insult."

"Sir," replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone, "It is not half the insult to you, that your appearance in my presence in a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail, would be to me."

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman you're a fellow."

"Sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "you're another!"

Mr. Tupman advanced a step or two, and glared at Mr. Pickwick. Mr. Pickwick returned the glare, concentrated into a focus by means of his spectacles, and breathed a bold defiance. Mr. Snodgrass and Mr. Winkle, looked on petrified at beholding such a scene between two such men.

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman, after a short pause, speaking in a low deep voice, "you have called me old."

"I have," said Mr. Pickwick.

"And fat."

"I reiterate the charge."

"And a fellow."

"So you are!"

There was a fearful pause.

"My attachment to your person, sir," said Mr. Tupman, speaking in a voice tremulous with emotion, and tucking up his wristbands mean while, "is great—very great—but upon that person, I must take summary vengeance."

"Come on, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick. Stimulated by the exciting nature of the dialogue, the heroic man actually threw himself into a paralytic attitude, confidently supposed by the two by-standers to have been intended as a posture of defence.

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass, suddenly recovering the power of speech, of which intense astonishment had previously bereft him, and rushing

between the two at the imminent hazard of receiving an application on the temple from each. "What! Mr. Pickwick, with the eyes of the world upon you! Mr. Tupman! who in common with us all, derives a lustre from his undying name! For shame, gentlemen; for shame."

The unwonted lines which momentary passion had ruled in Mr. Pickwick's clear and open brow, gradually melted away, as his young friend spoke, like the marks of a black-lead pencil beneath the softening influence of India rubber. His countenance had resumed its usual benign expression ere he concluded.

"I have been hasty," said Mr. Pickwick, "very hasty. Tupman, your hand."

The dark shadow passed from Mr. Tupman's face, as he warmly grasped the hand of his friend.

"I have been hasty, too," said he.

"No, no," interrupted Mr. Pickwick, "the fault was mine. You will wear the green velvet jacket?"

"No, no," replied Mr. Tupman.

"To oblige me, you will," resumed Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, well, I will," said Mr. Tupman.

It was accordingly settled that Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, should all wear fancy dresses. Thus Mr. Pickwick was led by the very warmth of his feelings to give his consent to a proceeding from which his better judgment would have recoiled—a more striking illustration of his amiable character could hardly have been conceived, even if the events recorded in these pages had been wholly imaginray.

Mr. Leo Hunter had not exaggerated the resources of Mr. Solomon Lucas. His wardrobe was extensive—very extensive—not strictly classical perhaps, nor quite new, nor did it contain any one garment made precisely after the fashion of any age

or time, but every thing was more or less spangled; and what *can* be prettier than spangles? It may be objected that they are not adapted to the day-light, but every body knows that they would glitter if there were lamps; and nothing can be clearer than that if people give fancy balls in the day-time, and the dresses do not show quite as well as they would by night, the fault lies solely with the people who give the fancy balls, and is in no wise chargeable on the spangles. Such was the convincing reasoning of Mr. Solomon Lucas; and influenced by such arguments did Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle, and Mr. Snodgrass, engage to array themselves in costumes which his taste and experience induced him to recommend as admirably suited to the occasion.

A carriage was hired from the Town Arms, for the accommodation of the Pickwickians, and a chariot was ordered from the same repository, for the purpose of conveying Mr. and Mrs. Pott to Mrs. Leo Hunter's grounds, which Mr. Pott, as a delicate acknowledgment of having received an invitation, had already confidently predicted in the Eatanswill Gazette "would present a scene of varied and delicious enchantment—a bewildering coruscation of beauty and talent—a lavish and prodigal display of hospitality—above all, a degree of splendour softened by the most exquisite taste; and adornment refined with perfect harmony and the chastest good-keeping—compared with which the fabled gorgeousness of Eastern Fairy Land itself would appear to be clothed in as many dark and murky colours, as must be the mind of the splenetic and unmanly being who could presume to taint with the venom of his envy, the preparations making by the virtuous and highly distinguished lady, at whose shrine this humble tribute of admiration was offered." This last was a piece of biting sarcasm against the Independent, who in consequence of not having been invited at all, had been through four

numbers affecting to sneer at the whole affair, in his very largest type, with all the adjectives in capital letters.

The morning came; it was a pleasant sight to behold Mr. Tupman in full Brigand's costume, with a very tight jacket, sitting like a pincushion over his back and shoulders: the upper portion of his legs encased in the velvet shorts, and the lower part thereof swathed in the complicated bandages to which all Brigands are peculiarly attached. It was pleasing to see his open and ingenuous countenance, well mustachioed and corked, looking out from an open shirt collar; and to contemplate the sugar-loaf hat, decorated with ribands of all colours, which he was compelled to carry on his knee, inasmuch as no known conveyance with a top to it, would admit of any man's carrying it between his head and the roof. Equally humorous and agreeable, was the appearance of Mr. Snodgrass in blue satin trunks and cloak, white silk tights and shoes, and Grecian helmet, which every body knows (and if they do not, Mr. Solomon Lucas did) to have been the regular, authentic, every-day costume of a Troubadour, from the earliest ages down to the time of their final disappearance from the face of the earth. All this was pleasant, but this was as nothing compared with the shouting of the populace when the carriage drew up, behind Mr. Pott's chariot, which chariot itself drew up at Mr. Pott's door, which door itself opened, and displayed the great Pott accoutred as a Russian officer of justice, with a tremendous knout in his hand—tastefully typical of the stern and mighty power of the Eatanswill Gazette, and the fearful lashings it bestowed on public offenders.

"Bravo!" shouted Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass from the passage, when they beheld the walking allegory.

"Bravo!" Mr. Pickwick was heard to exclaim, from the passage.

"Hoo—roar Pott," shouted the populace. Amid these salutations, Mr. Pott, smiling with that kind of bland dignity which sufficiently testified that he felt his power, and knew how to exert it, got into the chariot.

Then there emerged from the house, Mrs. Pott, who would have looked very like Apollo if she hadn't had a gown on: conducted by Mr. Winkle, who in his light red-coat, could not possibly have been mistaken for any thing but a sportsman, if he had not borne an equal resemblance to a general postman. Last of all, came Mr. Pickwick, whom the boys applauded as loudly as any body, probably under the impression that his tights and gaiters were some remnants of the dark ages; and then the two vehicles proceeded towards Mrs. Leo Hunter's. Mr. Weller (who was to assist in waiting) being stationed on the box of that in which his master was seated.

Every one of the men, women, boys, girls, and babies, who were assembled to see the visiters in their fancy dresses, screamed with delight and ecstasy, when Mr. Pickwick, with the Brigand on one arm, and the Troubadour on the other, walked solemnly up the entrance. Never were such shouts heard, as those which greeted Mr. Tupman's efforts to fix the sugar-loaf hat on his head, by way of entering the garden in style.

The preparations were on the most delightful scale; fully realizing the prophetic Pott's anticipations about the gorgeousness of Eastern Fairy-land, and at once affording a sufficient contradiction to the malignant statements of the reptile Independent. The grounds were more than an acre and a quarter in extent, and they were filled with people! Never was such a blaze of beauty, and fashion and literature. There was the young lady who "did" the poetry in the Eatanswill Gazette, in the garb of a sultana, leaning upon the arm of the young gentleman wh

"did" the review department, and who was appropriately habited in a field marshal's uniform—the boots excepted. There were hosts of these geniuses, and any reasonable person would have thought it honour enough to meet them. But more than these, there were half a dozen lions from London—authors, real authors, who had written whole books, and printed them afterwards—and here you might see 'em, walking about, like ordinary men, smiling, and talking—aye, and talking pretty considerable nonsense too, no doubt with the benign intention of rendering themselves intelligible to the common people about them. Moreover, there was a band of music in pasteboard caps; four something-ean singers in the costume of their country, and a dozen hired waiters in the costume of *their* country—and very dirty costume too. And above all, there was Mrs. Leo Hunter in the character of Minerva, receiving the company, and overflowing with pride and gratification at the notion of having called such distinguished individuals together.

"Mr. Pickwick, ma'am," said a servant, as that gentleman approached the presiding goddess, with his hat in his hand, and the Brigand and Troubadour on either arm.

"What—where!" exclaimed Mrs. Leo Hunter, starting up, in an affected rapture of surprise.

"Here," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Is it possible that I have really the gratification of beholding Mr. Pickwick himself!" ejaculated Mrs. Leo Hunter.

"No other, ma'am," replied Mr. Pickwick, bowing very low. "Permit me to introduce my friends—Mr. Tupman—Mr. Winkle—Mr. Snodgrass—to the authoress of 'The Expiring Frog.'"

Very few people but those who have tried it, know what a difficult process it is, to bow in green velvet smalls, and a tight jacket and high-crowned-hat, or in blue satin trunks and white silks, or knee-

cords and top-boots that were never made for the wearer, and have been fixed upon him without the remotest reference to the comparative dimensions of himself and the suit. Never were such distortions as Mr. Tupman's frame underwent in his efforts to appear easy and graceful—never was such ingenious posturing, as his fancy-dressed friends exhibited.

"Mr. Pickwick." said Mrs. Leo Hunter, "I must make you promise not to stir from my side the whole day. There are hundreds of people here, that I must positively introduce you to."

"You are very kind, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick.

"In the first place, here are my little girls; I had almost forgotten them," said Minerva, carelessly pointing towards a couple of full-grown young ladies, of whom one might be about twenty, and the other a year or two older, and who were dressed in very juvenile costumes—whether to make them look young, or their mamma younger, Mr. Pickwick does not distinctly inform us.

"They are very beautiful," said Mr. Pickwick, as the juveniles turned away, after being presented.

"They are very like their mamma, sir," said Mr. Pott, majestically.

"Oh! you naughty man," exclaimed Mrs. Leo Hunter, playfully tapping the Editor's arm with her fan (Minerva with a fan!)

"Why now, my dear Mrs. Hunter," said Mr. Pott, who was trumpeter in ordinary at the Den, "you *know* that when your picture was in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy, last year, every body inquired whether it was intended for you, or your youngest daughter; for you were so much alike that there was no telling the difference between you."

"Well, and if they did, why need you repeat it,

before strangers?" said Mrs. Leo Hunter, bestowing another tap on the slumbering lion of the Eatanswill Gazette.

"Count, Count," screamed Mrs. Leo Hunter to a well-whiskered individual in a foreign uniform, who was passing by.

"Ah! you want me?" said the Count, turning back.

"I want to introduce two very clever people to each other," said Mrs. Leo Hunter. "Mr. Pickwick, I have great pleasure in introducing you to Count Smorltork." She added in a hurried whisper to Mr. Pickwick—"the famous foreigner—gathering materials for his great work on England—hem?—Count Smorltork, Mr. Pickwick."

Mr. Pickwick saluted the Count with all the reverence due to so great a man, and the Count drew forth a set of tablets.

"What you say, Mrs. Hunt?" inquired the Count, smiling graciously on the gratified Mrs. Leo Hunter. "Pig Vig or Big Vig—what you call—Lawyer—eh? I see—that is it, Big Vig"—and the count was proceeding to enter Mr. Pickwick in his tablets, as a gentleman of the long-robe, who derived his name from the profession to which he belonged, when Mrs. Leo Hunter interposed.

"No, no, Count," said the lady, "Pick-wick."

"Ah, ah, I see," replied the Count, "Peck—Christian name; Weeks—surname; good, ver good. Peck Weeks. How you do, Weeks?"

"Quite well, I thank you," replied Mr. Pickwick, with all his usual affability. "Have you been long in England?"

"Long—ver long time—fortnight—more."

"Do you stay here long?"

"One week."

"You will have enough to do," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling, "to gather all the materials you want in that time."

"Eh, they are gathered," said the Count.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"They are here," added the Count, tapping his forehead significantly. "Large book at home—full of notes—music, picture, science, poetry, poltic: all tings."

"The word politics, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "comprises in itself, a difficult study of no inconsiderable magnitude."

"Ah!" said the Count, drawing out the tablets again, "ver good—fine words to begin a chapter. Chapter forty-seven. Poltics. The word poltic surprises by himself—" And down went Mr. Pickwick's remark, in Count Smoltorck's tablets, with such variations and additions as the Count's exuberant fancy suggested, or his imperfect knowledge of the language, occasioned.

"Count," said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

"Mrs. Hunt," replied the Count.

"This is Mr. Snodgrass, a friend of Mr. Pickwick's, and a poet."

"Stop," exclaimed the Count, bringing out the tablets once more. "Head, poetry—chapter, literary friends—name, Snowgrass; ver good. Introduced to Snowgrass—great poet, friend of Peek Weeks—by Mrs. Hunt, which wrote other sweet poem—what is that name—Frog—Perspiring Frog—ver good—ver good indeed." And the Count put up his tablets, and with sundry bows and acknowledgments walked away, thoroughly satisfied that he had made the most important and valuable additions to his stock of information.

"Wonderful man, Count Smorltork," said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

"Sound philosopher," said Pott.

"Clear-headed, strong-minded person," added Mr. Snodgrass.

A chorus of by-standers took up the shout of

Count Smorltork's praise, shook their heads sagely, and unanimously cried "Very."

As the enthusiasm in Count Smorltork's favour ran very high, his praises might have been sung until the end of the festivities, if the four something-ean singers had not ranged themselves in front of a small apple tree, to look picturesque, and commenced singing their national songs, which appeared by no means difficult of execution, inasmuch as the grand secret seemed to be, that three of the something-ean singers should grunt, while the fourth howled. This interesting performance having concluded amidst the loud plaudits of the whole company, a boy forthwith proceeded to entangle himself with the rails of a chair, and to jump over it, and to crawl under it, and fall down with it, and to do every thing but sit upon it, and then to make a cravat of his legs, and tie them round his neck, and then to illustrate the ease with which a human being can be made to look like a magnified toad—all which feats yielded high delight and satisfaction to the assembled spectators. After which, the voice of Mrs. Pott was heard to chirp faintly forth, something which courtesy interpreted into a song, which was all very classical, and strictly in character, because Apollo was himself a composer, and composers can very seldom sing their own music or any body else's, either. This was succeeded by Mrs. Leo Hunter's recitation of her far-famed ode to an expiring Frog, which was encored once, and would have been encored twice, if the major part of the guests, who thought it was high time to get something to eat, had not said that it was perfectly shameful to take advantage of Mrs. Hunter's good nature. So, although Mrs. Leo Hunter professed her perfect willingness to recite the ode again, her kind and considerate friends wouldn't hear of it on any account; and the refreshment room being thrown open, all the peo-

ple who had ever been there before, scrambled in with all possible despatch: Mrs. Leo Hunter's usual course of proceeding, being, to issue cards for a hundred, and breakfast for fifty, or in other words to feed only the very particular lions, and let the smaller animals take care of themselves.

"Where is Mr. Pott?" said Mrs. Leo Hunter, as she placed the aforesaid lions around her.

"Here I am," said the editor, from the very farthest end of the room; far beyond all hope of food. unless something was done for him by the hostess.

"Won't you come up here?"

"Oh pray don't mind him," said Mrs. Pott, in the most obliging voice—"you give yourself a great deal of unnecessary trouble, Mrs. Hunter. You'll do very well there, won't you—dear."

"Certainly—love," replied the unhappy Pott, with a grim smile. Alas for the knout! The nervous arm that wielded it, with such gigantic force upon public characters, was paralyzed beneath the glance of the imperious Mrs. Pott.

"Mrs. Leo Hunter looked round her, in triumph. Count Smorltork was busily engaged in taking notes of the contents of the dishes; Mr. Tupman was doing the honours of the lobster salad to several lionesses, with a degree of grace which no Brigand ever exhibited before; Mr. Snodgrass having cut out the young gentleman who cut up the books for the Eatanswill Gazette, was engaged in an impassioned argument with the young lady who did the poetry; and Mr. Pickwick was making himself universally agreeable. Nothing seemed wanting to render the select circle complete, when Mr. Leo Hunter, whose department on these occasions was to stand about in door-ways, and talk to the less important people—suddenly called out—

"My dear; here's Mr. Charles Fitzmarshall."

"O dear," said Mrs. Leo Hunter, "how anxiously I have been expecting him! Pray make room,

to let Mr. Fitzmarshall pass. Tell Mr. Fitzmarshall, my dear, to come up to me directly, to be scolded for coming so late."

"Coming, my dear ma'am," cried a voice, "as quick as I can—crowds of people—full room—hard work—very."

Mr. Pickwick's knife and fork fell from his hand. He stared across the table at Mr. Tupman, who had dropped *his* knife and fork, and was looking as if he were about to sink into the ground without farther notice.

"Ah!" cried the voice, as its owner pushed his way among the last five and twenty Turks, officers, cavaliers, and Charles the Seconds, that remained between him and the table, "regular mangle—Baker's patent—not a crease in my coat after all this squeezing—might have 'got up my linen as I came along'—ha! ha! not a bad idea, that—queer thing to have it mangled when it's upon one, though—trying process—very."

With these broken words, a young man dressed as a naval officer made his way up to the table, and presented to the astonished Pickwickians, the identical form and features of Mr. Alfred Jingle.

The offender had barely time to take Mrs. Leo Hunter's proffered hand, when his eyes encountered the indignant orbs of Mr. Pickwick.

"Hallo!" said Jingle. "Quite forgot—no directions to postillion—give 'em at once—back in a minute."

"The servant or Mr. Hunter will do it in a moment, Mr. Fitzmarshall," said Mrs. Leo Hunter.

"No, no—I'll do it—shan't be long—back in no time," replied Jingle. With these words, he disappeared among the crowd.

"Will you allow me to ask you, ma'am," said the excited Mr. Pickwick, rising from his seat, "who that young man is, and where he resides?"

"He is a gentleman of fortune, Mr. Pickwick,"

said Mrs. Leo Hunter, "to whom I very much want to introduce you. The Count will be delighted with him."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily. "His residence—"

"Is at present at the Angel at Bury."

"At Bury?"

"At Bury St. Edmunds, not many miles from here. But dear me, Mr. Pickwick, you are not going to leave us: surely, Mr. Pickwick, you cannot think of going so soon."

But long before Mrs. Leo Hunter had finished speaking, Mr. Pickwick had plunged through the throng, and reached the garden, whither he was shortly afterwards joined by Mr. Tupman, who had followed his friend closely.

"It's of no use," said Mr. Tupman. "He has gone."

"I know it," said Mr. Pickwick, "and I will follow him."

"Follow him. Where?" inquired Mr. Tupman.

"To the Angel at Bury," replied Mr. Pickwick, speaking very quickly. "How do we know whom he is deceiving there? He deceived a worthy man once, and we were the innocent cause. He shall not do it again, if I can help it; I'll expose him. Sam! Where's my servant?"

"Here you are, sir," said Mr. Weller, emerging from a sequestered spot, where he had been engagge in discussing a bottle of Madeira, which he had abstracted from the breakfast-table, an hour or two before. "Here's your servant, sir. Proud o' the title, as the Living Skellinton said, ven they show'd him."

"Follow me instantly," said Mr. Pickwick. "Tupman, if I stay at Bury, you can join me there, when I write. Till then, good-bye."

Remonstrances were useless. Mr. Pickwick was roused, and his mind was made up. Mr. Tup-

man returned to his companions; and in another hour had drowned all present recollection of Mr. Alfred Jingle, or Mr. Charles Fitzmarshall, in an exhilarating quadrille and a bottle of Champagne. By that time, Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller, perched on the outside of a stage coach, were every succeeding minute placing a less and less distance between themselves and the good old town of Bury Saint Edmunds.

CHAPTER XVI.

TOO FULL OF ADVENTURES TO BE BRIEFLY DESCRIBED.

There is no month in the whole year, in which nature wears a more beautiful appearance than in the month of August. Spring has many beauties, and May is a fresh and blooming month, but the charms of this time of year, are enhanced by their contrast with the winter season. August has no such advantage. It comes when we remember nothing but clear skies, green fields, and sweet-smelling flowers—when the recollection of snow, and ice, and bleak winds, has faded from our minds as completely as they have disappeared from the earth,—and yet what a pleasant time it is. Orchards and corn-fields ring with the hum of labour; trees bend beneath the thick clusters of rich fruit which bow their branches to the ground; and the corn, piled in graceful sheaves, or waving in every light breath that sweeps above it, as if it wooed the sickle, tinges the landscape with a golden hue. A mellow softness appears to hang over the whole earth; the influence of the seasons seems to extend itself to the very wagon, whose slow motion across the well-reaped field, is perceptible only to the eye, but strikes with no harsh sound upon the ear.

As the coach rolls swiftly past the fields and orchards which skirt the road, groups of women and children, piling the fruit in sieves, or gathering the scattered ears of corn, pause for an instant from

their labour, and shading the sun-burnt face with a still browner hand, gaze upon the passengers with curious eyes, while some stout urchin, too small to work, but too mischievous to be left at home, scrambles over the side of the basket in which he has been deposited for security, and kicks and screams with delight. The reaper stops in his work, and stands with folded arms, looking at the vehicle as it whirls past; and the rough cart horses bestow a sleepy glance upon the smart coach team, which says, as plainly as a horse's glance can, "It's all very fine to look at, but slow going, over a heavy field, is better than warm work like that, upon a dusty road, after all." You cast a look behind you, as you turn a corner of the road. The women and children have resumed their labour, the reaper once more stoops to his work, the cart horses have moved on, and all are again in motion.

The influence of a scene like this was not lost upon the well regulated mind of Mr. Pickwick. Intent upon the resolution he had formed of exposing the real character of the nefarious Jingle, in any quarter in which he might be pursuing his fraudulent designs, he sat at first taciturn and contemplative, brooding over the means by which his purpose could be best attained. By degrees his attention grew more and more attracted by the objects around him; and at last he derived as much enjoyment from the ride, as if it had been undertaken for the pleasantest reason in the world.

"Delightful prospect, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Beats the chimbley pots, sir," replied Mr. Weller, touching his hat.

"I suppose you have hardly seen any thing but chimney-pots and bricks and mortar, all your life, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, smiling.

"I worn't always a boots, sir," said Mr. Weller, with a shake of the head. "I was a vagginer's boy, once."

"When was that?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"When I vas first pitched neck and crop into the world, to play at leap-frog with its troubles," replied Sam. "I vas a carrier's boy at startin': then a vagginer's, then a helper, then a boots. Now I'm a gen'lm'n's servant. I shall be a gen-'lm'n myself one of these days, perhaps, with a pipe in my mouth, and a summer-house in the back garden. Who knows? *I* shouldn't be surprised for once."

"You are quite a philosopher, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"It runs in the family, I b'lieve sir," replied Mr. Weller. "My father's werry much in that line, now. If my mother-in-law blows him up, he whistles. She flies in a passion, and brakes his pipe; he steps out and gets another. Then she screams werry loud, and falls into 'sterics; and he smokes werry comfortably 'till she comes to again. That's philosophy sir, an't it?"

"A very good substitute for it, at all events," replied Mr. Pickwick, laughing. "It must have been of great service to you, in the course of your rambling life, Sam."

"Service, sir," exclaimed Sam. "You may say that. Arter I run away from the carrier, and afore I took up with the vagginer, I had unfurnished lodgin's for a fortnight."

"Unfurnished lodgings?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes—the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge. Fine sleepin-place—vithin ten minutes' walk of all the public offices—only if there is any objection to it, it is that the sitivation's *rayther* too airy. I see some queer sights there."

"Ah, I suppose you did," said Mr. Pickwick, with an air of considerable interest.

"Sights, sir," resumed Mr. Weller, "as 'ud penetrate your benevolent heart, and come out on the other side. You don't see the reg'lar wagrants

there; trust 'em, they knows better than that. Young beggars, male and female, as hasn't made a rise in their profession, takes up their quarters there sometimes; but it's generally the worn-out, starving, houseless creeturs as rolls themselves up in the dark corners o' them lonesome places—poor creeturs as an't up to the twopenny rope."

"And pray, Sam, what *is* the twopenny rope?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"The twopenny rope, sir," replied Mr. Weller, "is just a cheap lodgin'-house, vere the beds is twopence a night."

"What do they call a bed a rope for?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your innocence, sir, that a'n't it," replied Sam. "Ven the lady and gen'lm'n as keeps the Hot-el, first begun business, they used to make the beds on the floor; but this wouldn't do at no price, 'cos instead o' taking a moderate twopenn'orth o' sleep, the lodgers used to lie there half the day. So now they has two ropes, 'bout six foot apart, and three from the floor, which goes right down the room; and the beds are made of slips of coarse sacking, stretched across 'em."

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Well," said Mr. Weller, "the adwantage o' the plan's hobvious. At six o'clock every mornin', they lets go the ropes at one end, and down falls all the lodgers. 'Consequence is, that being thoroughly waked, they get up werry quietly, and walk away!"

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Sam, suddenly breaking off in his loquacious discourse. "Is this Bury Saint Edmunds?"

"It is," replied Mr. Pickwick.

The coach rattled through the well-paved streets of a handsome little town, of thriving and cleanly appearance, and stopped before a large inn situated in a wide open street, nearly facing the old abbey.

"And this," said Mr. Pickwick, looking up, "is

the Angel. We alight here, Sam. But some caution is necessary. Order a private room, and do not mention my name. You understand."

"Right as a trivet, sir;" replied Mr. Weller, with a wink of intelligence; and having dragged Mr. Pickwick's portmanteau from the hind boot, into which it had been hastily thrown when they joined the coach at Eatanswill, Mr. Weller disappeared on his errand. A private room was speedily engaged; and into it, Mr. Pickwick was ushered without delay.

"Now, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, "the first thing to be done is to"—

"Order dinner, sir," interposed Mr. Weller. "It's werry late, sir."

"Ah, so it is," said Mr. Pickwick, looking at his watch. "You are right, Sam."

"And if I might adwise, sir," added Mr. Weller, "I'd just have a good night's rest arterwards, and not begin inquiring arter this here deep 'un 'till the mornin'. There's nothin' so refreshin' as sleep, sir, as the servant-girl said afore she drank the egg-cup-full o' laudanum."

"I think you are right, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick. "But I must first ascertain that he is in the house, and not likely to go away."

"Leave that to me, sir," said Sam. "Let me order you a snug little dinner, and make my inquiries below while it's a getting ready; I could worm ev'ry secret out o' the boot's heart, in five minutes."

"Do so," said Mr. Pickwick; and Mr. Weller at once retired.

In half an hour, Mr. Pickwick was seated at a very satisfactory dinner; and in three-quarters Mr. Weller returned with the intelligence that Mr. Charles Fitzmarshall had ordered his private room to be retained for him, until farther notice. He was going to spend the evening at some private

house in the neighbourhood, had ordered the boots to sit up until his return, and had taken his servant with him.

"Now sir," argued Mr. Weller, when he had concluded his report, "if I can get a talk with this here servant in the mornin', he'll tell me all his master's concerns."

"How do you know that?" interposed Mr. Pickwick.

"Bless your heart, sir, servants always do," replied Mr. Weller.

"Oh, ah, I forgot that," said Mr. Pickwick.—"Well."

"Then you can arrange what's best to be done, sir, and we can act accordingly."

As it appeared that this was the best arrangement that could be made, it was finally agreed upon. Mr. Weller, by his master's permission, retired to spend the evening in his own way; and was shortly afterwards, elected, by the unanimous voice of the assembled company, into the tap-room chair, in which honourable post he acquitted himself so much to the satisfaction of the gentlemen-frequenters, that their roars of laughter and approbation penetrated to Mr. Pickwick's bed-room, and shortened the term of his natural rest, by at least three hours.

Early on the ensuing morning, Mr. Weller was dispelling all the feverish remains of the previous evening's conviviality, through the instrumentality of a halfpenny shower-bath (having induced a young gentleman attached to the stable-department, by the offer of that coin, to pump over his head and face, until he was perfectly restored,) when he was attracted by the appearance of a young fellow in mulberry coloured livery, who was sitting on a bench in the yard, reading what appeared to be a hymn-book, with an air of deep abstraction, but who occasionally stole a glance at the individual under the

pump, as if he took some interest in his proceedings, nevertheless.

"You're a rum 'un to look at, you are," thought Mr. Weller the first time his eyes encountered the glance of the stranger in the mulberry coloured suit, who had a large, sallow, ugly face: very sunken eyes, and a gigantic head, from which depended a quantity of lank black hair. "You're a rum 'un," thought Mr. Weller; and thinking this, he went on washing himself, and thought no more about him.

Still the man kept glancing from his hymn-book to Sam, and from Sam to his hymn-book, as if he wanted to open a conversation. So at last, Sam, by way of giving him an opportunity, said, with a familiar nod—

"How are you, governor?"

"I am happy to say, I am pretty well, sir," said the man, speaking with great deliberation, and closing the book. "I hope you are the same, sir?"

"Why, if I felt less like a walking brandy bottle, I shouldn't be quite so staggery this mornin'," replied Sam. "Are you stoppin' in this house, old 'un?"

The mulberry man replied in the affirmative.

"How was it, you worn't one of us, last night?" inquired Sam, scrubbing his face with the towel. "You seem one of the jolly sort—looks as conwivial as a live trout in a lime-basket," added Mr. Weller in an under tone.

"I was out last night, with my master," replied the stranger.

"What's his name?" inquired Mr. Weller, colouring up very red with sudden excitement, and the friction of the towel combined.

"Fitzmarshall," said the mulberry man.

"Give us your hand," said Mr. Weller, advancing; "I should like to know you. I like your appearance, old fellow."

"Well, that is very strange," said the mulberry man, with great simplicity of manner. "I like

yours so much, that I wanted to speak to you, from the very first moment I saw you under the pump."

"Did you though?"

"Upon my word. "Now, isn't that curious?"

"Werry sing'ler," said Sam, inwardly congratulating himself upon the softness of the stranger. "What's your name, my patriarch?"

"Job."

"And a werry good name it is; only one, I know, that ain't got a nickname to it. What's the other name?"

"Trotter," said the stranger. "What is yours?"

Sam bore in mind his master's caution, and replied,

"My name's Walker; my master's name's Wilkins. Will you take a drop o' somethin' this mornin,' Mr. Trotter?"

Mr. Trotter acquiesced in this agreeable proposal: and having deposited his book in his coat-pocket, accompanied Mr. Weller to the tap, where they were soon occupied in discussing an exhilarating compound, formed by mixing together, in a pewter vessel, certain quantities of British Hollands, and the fragrant essence of the clove.

"And what sort of a place have you got?" inquired Sam, as he filled his companion's glass, for the second time.

"Bad," said Job, smacking his lips, "very bad."

"You don't mean that," said Sam.

"I do, indeed. Worse than that, my master's going to be married."

"No."

"Yes; and worse than that, too, he's going to run away with an immense rich heiress, from boarding-school."

"What a dragon" said Sam, re-filling his companion's glass. "It's some boarding-school in this town, I suppose, a'n't it?"

Now, although this question was put in the most

careless tone imaginable, Mr. Job Trotter plainly showed, by gestures, that he perceived his new friend's anxiety to draw forth an answer to it. He emptied his glass, looked mysteriously at his companion, winked both of his small eyes, one after the other, and finally made a motion with his arm, as if he were working an imaginary pump handle: thereby intimating that he (Mr. Trotter) considered himself as undergoing the process of being pumped, by Mr. Samuel Weller.

"No, no," said Mr. Trotter, in conclusion, "that's not to be told to every body. That is a secret—a great secret, Mr. Walker."

As the mulberry man said this, he turned his glass upside down, by way of reminding his companion that he had nothing left wherewith to slake his thirst. Sam observed the hint; and feeling the delicate manner in which it was conveyed, ordered the pewter vessel to be refilled, whereat the small eyes of the mulberry man glistened.

"And so it's a secret," said Sam.

"I should rather suspect it was," said the mulberry man, sipping his liquor, with a complacent face.

"I suppose your mas'r's very rich?" said Sam.

Mr. Trotter smiled, and holding his glass in his left hand, gave four distinct slaps on the pocket of his mulberry indescribables with his right, as if to intimate that his master might have done the same without alarming any body much by the chinking of coin.

"Ah," said Sam, "that's the game, is it?"

The mulberry man nodded significantly.

"Well, and don't you think, old feller," remonstrated Mr. Weller, "that if you let your master take in this here young lady, you're a precious rascal?"

"I know that," said Job Trotter, turning upon his companion a countenance of deep contrition,

and groaning slightly. "I know that, and that's what it is that preys upon my mind. But what am I to do?"

"Do!" said Sam; "diwulge to the missis, and give up your master."

"Who'd believe me?" replied Job Trotter. "The young lady's considered the very picture of innocence and discretion. She'd deny it, and so would my master. Who'd believe me? I should lose my place, and get indicted for a conspiracy, or some such thing; that's all I should take by my motion."

"There's somethin' in that," said Sam, ruminating: "there's somethin' in that."

"If I knew any respectable gentleman who would take the matter up," continued Mr. Trotter, "I might have some hope of preventing the elopement; but there's the same difficulty, Mr. Walker, just the same. I know no gentleman in this strange place; and ten to one if I did, whether he would believe my story."

"Come this way," said Sam, suddenly jumping up, and grasping the mulberry man by the arm. "My mas'r's the man you want, I see." And after a slight resistance on the part of Job Trotter, Sam led his newly found friend to the apartment of Mr. Pickwick, to whom he presented him, together with a brief summary of the dialogue we have just repeated.

"I am very sorry to betray my master, sir," said Job Trotter, applying to his eyes a pink check pocket handkerchief of about three inches square.

"The feeling does you a great deal of honour," replied Mr. Pickwick; "but it is your duty, nevertheless.

"I know it is my duty, sir," replied Job, with great emotion. "We should all try to discharge our duty, sir, and I humbly endeavour to discharge mine, sir; but it is a hard trial to betray a mas-

ter, sir, whose clothes you wear, and whose bread you eat, even though he is a scoundrel, sir."

"You are a very good fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, much affected; "an honest fellow."

"Come, come," interposed Sam, who had witnessed Mr. Trotter's tears with considerable impatience, "blow this here water-cart bis'ness. It won't do no good, this won't."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, reproachfully, "I am sorry to find that you have so little respect for this young man's feelings."

"His feelins is all werry well, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "and as they're so werry fine, and it's a pity he should lose 'em, I think he'd better keep 'em in his own bussum, than let 'em ewaporate in hot water, 'specially as they do no good. Tears never yet wound up a clock, or worked a steam ingin'. The next time you go out to a smoking party, young feller, fill your pipe with that 'ere reflection; and for the present, just put that bit of pink gingham into your pocket. 'Tan't so handsome that you need keep waving it about, as if you was a tight-rope dancer."

"My man is in the right," said Mr. Pickwick, accosting Job, "although his mode of expressing his opinion is somewhat homely, and occasionally incomprehensible."

"He is, sir, very right," said Mr. Trotter, "and I will give way no longer."

"Very well," said Mr. Pickwick. "Now, where is this boarding-school?"

"It is a large, old, red-brick house, just outside the town, sir," replied Job Trotter.

"And when," said Mr. Pickwick, "when is this villanous design to be carried into execution—when is this elopement to take place?"

"To-night, sir," replied Job.

"To-night!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"This very night, sir," replied Job Trotter. "That is what alarms me so much."

"Instant measures must be taken," said Mr. Pickwick. "I will see the lady who keeps the establishment, immediately."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Job, "but that course of proceeding will never do."

"Why not?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"My master, sir, is a very artful man."

"I know he is," said Mr. Pickwick.

"And he has so wound himself round the old lady's heart, sir," resumed Job, "that she would believe nothing to his prejudice, if you went down on your bare knees, and swore it; especially as you have no proof but the word of a servant, who, for any thing she knows (and my master would be sure to say so,) was discharged for some fault, and does this in revenge."

"What had better be done, then?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Nothing but taking him in the very fact of eloping will convince the old lady, sir," replied Job.

"All them old cats *will* run their heads agin milestones," observed Mr. Weller in a parenthesis.

"But this taking him in the very act of elopement, would be a very difficult thing to accomplish, I fear," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I don't know, sir," said Mr. Trotter, after a few moments' reflection. "I think it might be very easily done."

"How?" was Mr. Pickwick's inquiry.

"Why," replied Mr. Trotter, "my master and I, being in the confidence of the two servants, will be secreted in the kitchen at ten o'clock. When the family have retired to rest, we shall come out of the kitchen, and the young lady out of her bedroom. A post-chaise will be waiting, and away we go."

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, sir, I have been thinking that if you were waiting in the garden behind, alone—"

"Alone," said Mr. Pickwick. "Why alone?"

"I thought it very natural," replied Job, "that the old lady wouldn't like such an unpleasant discovery to be made before more persons than can possibly be helped. The young lady too, sir—consider her feelings."

"You are very right," said Mr. Pickwick. "The consideration evinces great delicacy of feeling. Go on; you are very right."

"Well, sir, I was thinking that if you were waiting in the back garden alone, and I was to let you in, at the door which opens into it, from the end of the passage, at exactly half-past eleven o'clock, you would be just in the very moment of time, to assist me in frustrating the designs of this bad man, by whom I have been unfortunately insnared." Here Mr. Trotter sighed deeply.

"Don't distress yourself on that account," said Mr. Pickwick, "if he had one grain of the delicacy of feeling which distinguishes you, humble as your station is, I should have some hopes of him."

Job Trotter bowed low; and in spite of Mr. Weller's previous remonstrance, the tears again rose to his eyes.

"I never see such a feller," said Sam. "Blessed if I don't think he's got a main in his head as is always turned on."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, with great severity. "Hold your tongue."

"Werry well, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I don't like this plan," said Mr. Pickwick, after deep meditation. "Why cannot I communicate with the young lady's friends?"

"Because they live one hundred miles from here, sir," responded Job Trotter.

"That's a clincher," said Mr. Weller, aside.

"Then this garden," resumed Mr. Pickwick. "How am I to get into it?"

"The wall is very low, sir, and your servant will give you a leg up."

"My servant will give me a leg up," repeated Mr. Pickwick, mechanically. "You will be sure to be near this door, that you speak of?"

"You cannot mistake it sir; it's the only one that opens into the garden. Tap at it, when you hear the clock strike, and I will open it instantly."

"I don't like the plan," said Mr. Pickwick; "but as I see no other, and as the happiness of this young lady's whole life is at stake, I adopt it I shall be sure to be there."

Thus, for the second time, did Mr. Pickwick's innate good-feeling involve him in an enterprise from which he would most willingly have stood aloof.

"What is the name of the house?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Westgate House, sir. You turn a little to the right when you get to the end of the town; it stands by itself, some little distance off the high road, with the name on a brass plate on the gate."

"I know it," said Mr. Pickwick. "I observed it once before, when I was in this town. You may depend upon me."

Mr. Trotter made another bow, and turned to depart, when Mr. Pickwick thrust a guinea into his hand.

"You're a fine fellow," said Mr. Pickwick, "and I admire your goodness of heart. No thanks. Remember—eleven o'clock."

"There is no fear of my forgetting it, sir," replied Job Trotter. With these words he left the room followed by Sam.

"I say," said the latter, "not a bad notion that 'ere crying. I'd cry like a rain-water spout in a shower, on such good terms. How do you do it?"

"It comes from the heart, Mr. Walker," replied Job, solemnly, "Good morning, sir."

"You're a soft customer, you are;—we're got it all out o' you, any how," thought Mr. Weller, as Job walked away.

We cannot state the precise nature of the thoughts which passed through Mr. Trotter's mind, because we don't know what they were.

The day wore on, evening came, and at a little before ten o'clock Sam Weller reported that Mr. Jingle and Job had gone out together, that their luggage was packed up, and that they had ordered a chaise. The plot was evidently in execution, as Mr. Trotter had foretold.

Half-past ten o'clock arrived, and it was time for Mr. Pickwick to issue forth on his delicate errand. Resisting Sam's tender of his great coat, in order that he might have no incumbrance in scaling the wall, he set forth, followed by his attendant.

There was a bright moon, but it was behind the clouds. It was a fine dry night, but it was most uncommonly dark. Paths, hedges, fields, houses, and trees, were enveloped in one deep shade. The atmosphere was hot and su try, the summer lightning quivered faintly on the verge of the horizon, and was the only sight that varied the dull gloom in which every thing was wrapped—sound there was none except the distant barking of some restless house-dog.

They found the house, read the brass-plate, walked round the wall, and stopped at that portion of it which divided them from the bottom of the garden.

"You will return to the inn, Sam, when you have assisted me over," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Werry well, sir."

"And you will sit up, till I return."

"Cert'nly, sir."

"Take hold of my leg; and when I say 'Over,' raise me gently."

"All right, sir,"

Having settled these preliminaries, Mr. Pickwick grasped the top of the wall, and gave the word "Over," which was very literally obeyed. Whether his body partook in some degree of the elasticity of his mind, or whether Mr. Weller's notions of a gentle push were of a somewhat rougher description than Mr. Pickwick's, the immediate effect of his assistance was to jerk that immortal gentleman completely over the wall on to the bed beneath, where, after crushing three gooseberry bushes and a rose-tree, he finally alighted at full length.

"You ha'n't hurt yourself, I hope, sir," said Sam, in a loud whisper, as soon as he recovered from the surprise consequent upon the mysterious disappearance of his master.

"I have not hurt *myself*, Sam, certainly," replied Mr. Pickwick, from the other side of the wall, "But I rather think that *you* have hurt *me*."

"I hope not, sir." said Sam.

"Never mind," said Mr. Pickwick, rising, "it's nothing but a few scratches. Go away, or we shall be overheard."

"Good-bye, sir."

"Good-bye."

With stealthy steps Sam Weller departed, leaving Mr. Pickwick alone in the garden.

Lights occasionally appeared in the different windows of the house, or glanced from the staircases, as if the inmates were retiring to rest. Not caring to go too near the door, until the appointed time, Mr. Pickwick crouched into an angle of the wall, and awaited its arrival.

It was a situation which might well have depressed the spirits of many a man. Mr. Pickwick,

however, felt neither depression nor misgiving. He knew that his purpose was in the main a good one, and he placed implicit reliance on the high-minded Job. It was dull, certainly; not to say, dreary; but a contemplative man can always employ himself in meditation. Mr. Pickwick had meditated himself into a doze, when he was roused by the chimes of the neighbouring church ringing out the hour—half past eleven.

"That's the time," thought Mr. Pickwick, getting cautiously on his feet. He looked up at the house. The lights had disappeared, and the shutters were closed—all in bed no doubt. He walked on tip-toe to the door, and gave a gentle tap. Two or three minutes passing without any reply, he gave another tap rather louder, and then another rather louder than that.

At length the sound of feet was audible upon the stairs, and then the light of a candle shone through the key-hole of the door. There was a good deal of unchaining and unbolting, and the door was slowly opened.

Now the door opened outwards: and as the door opened wider and wider, Mr. Pickwick receded behind it, more and more. What was his astonishment when he just peeped out, by way of caution, to see that the person who had opened it was—not Job Trotter, but a servant-girl with a candle in her hand! Mr. Pickwick drew in his head again, with the swiftness displayed by that admirable melo-dramatic performer. Punch, when he lies in wait for the flat-headed comedian with the tin box of music.

"It must have been the cat, Sarah," said the girl, addressing herself to some one in the house. "Puss, puss, puss—tit, tit, tit."

But no animal being decoyed by these blandishments, the girl slowly closed the door, and re-fast-

ened it; leaving Mr. Pickwick drawn up straight against the wall.

"This is very curious," thought Mr. Pickwick. "They are sitting up beyond their usual hour, I suppose. Extremely unfortunate, that they should have chosen this night of all others, for such a purpose—exceedingly." And with these thoughts, Mr. Pickwick cautiously retired to the angle of the wall in which he had been before ensconced; waiting until such time as he might deem it safe to repeat the signal.

He had not been here five minutes, when a vivid flash of lightning was followed by a loud peal of thunder that crashed and rolled away in the distance with terrific noise—then came another flash of lightning, brighter than the other, and a second peal of thunder louder than the first; and then down came the rain, with a force and fury that swept every thing before it.

Mr. Pickwick was perfectly aware that a tree is a very dangerous neighbour in a thunder-storm. He had a tree on his right, a tree on his left, a third before him, and a fourth behind. If he remained where he was, he might fall the victim of an accident; if he showed himself in the centre of the garden, he might be consigned to a constable; —once or twice he tried to scale the wall, but having no other legs this time than those with which Nature had furnished him, the only effect of his struggles was to inflict a variety of very unpleasant gratings on his knees and shins, and to throw him into a state of the most profuse perspiration.

"What a dreadful situation," said Mr. Pickwick, pausing to wipe his brow after this exercise. He looked up at the house—all was dark. They must be gone to bed now. He would try the signal again.

He walked on tip-toe across the moist gravel, and tapped at the door. He held his breath, and listened at the key-hole. No reply; very odd. Another knock. He listened again. There was a low whispering inside, and then a voice cried—

"Who's there?"

"That's not Job," thought Mr. Pickwick, hastily drawing himself straight up against the wall again. "It's a woman."

He had scarcely had time to form this conclusion, when a window above stairs, was thrown up, and three or four female voices repeated the query—"Who's there?"

Mr. Pickwick dared not move hand or foot. It was clear that the whole establishment was roused. He made up his mind to remain where he was until the alarm had subsided: and then to make a supernatural effort, and get over the wall, or perish in the attempt.

Like all Mr. Pickwick's determinations, this was the best that could be made under the circumstances; but, unfortunately, it was founded upon the assumption that they would not venture to open the door again. What was his discomfiture, when he heard the chain and bolts withdrawn, and saw the door slowly opening wider and wider! He retreated into the corner, step by step; but do what he would, the interposition of his own person, prevented its being opened to its utmost width.

"Who's there?" screamed a numerous chorus of treble voices from the stair-case inside, consisting of the spinster lady of the establishment, three teachers, five female servants, and thirty boarders, all half-dressed, and in a forest of curl-papers.

Of course Mr. Pickwick didn't say who *was* there: and then the burden of the chorus changed into—"Oh! I am so frightened."

"Cook," said the lady abbess, who took care to be on the top stair, the very last of the group—

"Cook, why don't you go a little way into the garden?"

"Please ma'am, I don't like," responded the cook.

"What a stupid thing that cook is," said the thirty boarders.

"Cook," said the lady abbess, with great dignity; don't answer me, if you please. I insist upon your looking into the garden, immediately."

Here the cook began to cry, and the house-maid said it was a "shame!" for which partisanship she received a month's warning on the spot.

"Do you hear, cook?" said the lady abbess, stamping her foot, impatiently.

"Don't you hear your misses, cook?" said the three teachers.

"What an impudent thing, that cook is!" said the thirty boarders.

The unfortunate cook, thus strongly urged, advanced a step or two, and holding her candle just where it prevented her seeing any thing at all, declared there was nothing there, and it must have been the wind; and the door was just going to be closed in consequence, when an inquisitive boarder, who had been peeping between the hinges, set up a fearful screaming, which called back the cook and the housemaid, and all the more adventurous, in no time.

"What *is* the matter with Miss Smithers?" said the lady abbess, as the aforesaid Miss Smithers proceeded to go into hysterics of four young lady power.

"Oh, Miss Smithers dear," said the other nine-and-twenty boarders.

"Oh, the man—the man—behind the door!" screamed Miss Smithers.

The lady abbess no sooner heard this appalling cry, than she retreated to her own bed-room, double-locked the door, and fainted away all comfortably. The boarders, and the teachers, and the ser-

vants, fell back, upon the stairs, and upon each other; and never was such a screaming, and fainting, and struggling, beheld. In the midst of the tumult, Mr. Pickwick emerged from his concealment, and presented himself amongst them.

"Ladies—dear ladies," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, he says we're dear," cried the oldest and ugliest teacher. "Oh the wretch."

"Ladies," roared Mr. Pickwick, rendered desperate by the danger of his situation. "Hear me. I am no robber. I want the lady of the house."

"Oh, what a ferocious monster!" screamed another teacher. "He wants Miss Tomkins."

Here there was a general scream.

"Ring the alarm bell, somebody," cried a dozen voices.

"Don't—don't," shouted Mr. Pickwick. "Look at me. Do I look like a robber? My dear ladies—you may bind me hand and leg, or lock me up in a closet, if you like. Only hear what I have got to say—only hear me."

"How did you come in our garden?" faltered the house-maid.

"Call the lady of the house, and I'll tell her every thing—every thing:" said Mr. Pickwick, exerting his lungs to the utmost pitch. "Call her—only be quiet, and call her, and you shall hear every thing,"

It might have been Mr. Pickwick's appearance, or it might have been his manner, or it might have been the temptation—so irresistible to a female mind—of hearing something at present enveloped in mystery, that reduced the more reasonable portion of the establishment (some four individuals) to a state of comparative quiet. By them it was proposed, as a test of Mr. Pickwick's sincerity, that he should immediately submit to personal restraint; and that gentleman having consented to hold a con-

ference with Miss Tomkins, from the interior of a closet in which the day boarders hung their bonnets and sandwich-bags, he at once stepped into it, of his own accord, and was securely locked in. This revived the others; and Miss Tomkins having been brought to, and brought down, the conference began.

"What did you do in my garden, man?" said Miss Tomkins, in a faint voice.

"I came to warn you, that one of your young ladies was going to elope to-night," replied Mr. Pickwick, from the interior of the closet.

"Elope!" exclaimed Miss Tomkins, the three teachers, the thirty boarders, and the five servants. "Who with?"

"Your friend, Mr. Charles Fitzmarshall."

"*My* friend! I don't know any such person."

"Well: Mr. Jingle, then."

"I never heard the name in my life."

"Then I have been deceived, and deluded," said Mr. Pickwick. "I have been the victim of a conspiracy—a foul and base conspiracy. Send to the Angel, my dear ma'am, if you don't believe me. Send to the Angel for Mr. Pickwick's man-servant, I implore you, ma'am."

"He must be respectable—he keeps a man-servant," said Miss Tomkins to the writing and ciphering governess.

"It's my opinion, Miss Tomkins," said the writing and ciphering governess, "that his man-servant keeps him. *I* think he's a madman, Miss Tomkins, and the other's his keeper."

"I think you are very right, Miss Gwynn," responded Miss Tomkins. "Let two of the servants repair to the Angel, and let the others remain here, to protect us."

So two of the servants were despatched to the Angel in search of Mr. Samuel Weller: and the remaining three stopped behind to protect Miss Tomkins, and the three teachers, and the thirty boarders.

And Mr. Pickwick sat down in the closet, beneath a grove of sandwich bags, and awaited the return of the messengers, with all the philosophy and fortitude he could summon to his aid.

An hour and a half elapsed before they came back, and when they did come, Mr. Pickwick recognised, in addition to the voice of Mr. Samuel Weller, two other voices, the tones of which struck familiarly on his ear: but whose they were, he could not for the life of him call to mind.

A very brief conversation ensued. The door was unlocked. Mr. Pickwick stepped out of the closet, and found himself in the presence of the whole establishment of Westgate House, Mr. Samuel Weller, and—old Wardle, and his destined son-in-law, Mr. Trundle!

"My dear friend," said Mr. Pickwick, running forward and grasping Wardle's hand, "my dear friend, pray, for Heaven's sake, explain to this lady the unfortunate and dreadful situation in which I am placed. You must have heard it from my servant; say, at all events, my dear fellow, that I am neither a robber nor a madman."

"I have said so, my dear friend. I have said so already," replied Mr. Wardle, shaking the right hand of his friend, while Mr Trundle shook the left.

"And whoever says, or has said, he is," interposed Mr. Weller, stepping forward, "says that which is not the truth, but so far from it, on the contrairy, quite the rewerse. And if there's any number o' men on these here premises as has said so, I shall be werry happy to give 'em all a werry convincing proof o' their being mistaken, in this here werry room, if these werry respectable ladies'll have the goodness to retire, and order 'em up, one at a time." Having delivered this defiance with great volubility, Mr. Weller struck his open palm emphatically with his clenched fist, and winked plea-

santly on Miss Tomkins, the intensity of whose horror at his supposing it within the bounds of possibility that there could be any men on the premises of Westgate House Establishment for Young Ladies, it is impossible to describe.

Mr. Pickwick's explanation having been already partially made, was soon concluded. But neither in the course of his walk home with his friends, nor afterwards when seated before a blazing fire at the supper he so much needed, could a single observation be drawn from him. He seemed bewildered and amazed. Once, and only once, he turned round to Mr. Wardle, and said,

"How did you come here?"

"Trundle and I came down here, for some good shooting on the first," replied Wardle. "We arrived to-night and were astonished to hear from your servant that you were here too. But I am glad you are," said the jolly old fellow, slapping him on the back. "I am glad you are. We shall have a jolly party on the first, and we'll give Winkle another chance—eh, old boy?"

Mr. Pickwick made no reply; he did not even ask after his friends at Dingley Dell, and shortly afterwards retired for the night, desiring Sam to fetch his candle when he rung.

The bell did ring in due course, and Mr. Weller presented himself.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, looking out from under the bed-clothes.

"Sir," said Mr. Weller.

Mr. Pickwick paused, and Mr. Weller snuffed the candle.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick again, as if with a desperate effort.

"Sir," said Mr. Weller, once more.

"Where is that Trotter?"

"Job, sir?"

"Yes."

"Gone, sir."

"With his master, I suppose?"

"Friend or master, or whatever he is, he's gone with him," replied Mr. Weller. "There's a pair on 'em, sir."

"Jingle suspected my design, and set that fellow on you, with this story, I suppose?" said Mr. Pickwick, half choking.

"Just that, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"It was all false, of course?"

"All, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "Reg'lar do, sir; artful dodge."

"I don't think he'll escape us quite so easily the next time, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"I don't think he will, sir."

"Whenever I meet that Jingle again, wherever it is," said Mr. Pickwick, raising himself in bed, and indenting his pillow with a tremendous blow, "I'll inflict personal chastisement on him, in addition to the exposure he so richly merits. I will or my name is not Pickwick."

"And venever I catches hold o' that there melancholly chap with the black hair," said Sam, "if I don't bring some real water into his eyes, for once in a way, my name a'n't Weller. Good night, sir."

CHAPTER XVII.

SHOWING THAT AN ATTACK OF RHEUMATISM, IN SOME CASES, ACTS AS A QUICKENER TO INVENTIVE GENIUS.

The constitution of Mr. Pickwick, though able to sustain a very considerable amount of exertion and fatigue, was not proof against such a combination of attacks as he had undergone on the memorable night recorded in the last chapter. The process of being washed in the night air, and rough-dried in a close closet, is as dangerous as it is peculiar. Mr. Pickwick was laid up with an attack of rheumatism.

But although the bodily powers of the great man were thus impaired, his mental energies retained their pristine vigour. His spirits were elastic; his good humour was restored. Even the vexation consequent upon his recent adventure had vanished from his mind; and he could join in the hearty laughter which any allusion to it excited in Mr. Wardle, without anger and without embarrassment. Nay, more. During the two days Mr. Pickwick was confined to his bed, Sam was his constant attendant. On the first, he endeavoured to amuse his master by anecdote and conversation; on the second Mr. Pickwick demanded his writing-desk, and pen and ink, and was deeply engaged during the whole day. On the third, being able to sit up in his bed-chamber, he despatched his valet with a message to Mr.

Wardle and Mr. Trundle, intimating that if they would take their wine there, that evening, they would greatly oblige him. The invitation was most willingly accepted; and when they were seated over their wine, Mr. Pickwick with sundry blushes, produced the following little tale, as having been "edited" by himself, during his recent indisposition, from his notes of Mr. Weller's unsophisticated recital.

"THE PARISH CLERK—A TALE OF TRUE LOVE.

"ONCE upon a time, in a very small country town, at a considerable distance from London, there lived a little man named Nathaniel Pipkin, who was the parish clerk of the little town, and lived in a little house in the little high street, within ten minutes' walk of the little church; and who was to be found every day from nine till four, teaching a little learning to the little boys. Nathaniel Pipkin was a harmless, inoffensive, good-natured being, with a turned-up nose, and rather turned-in legs, a cast in his eye, and a halt in his gait; and he divided his time between the church and his school, verily believing that there existed not, on the face of the earth, so clever a man as the curate, so imposing an apartment as the vestry-room, or so well ordered a seminary as his own. Once, and only once, in his life, Nathaniel Pipkin had seen a bishop—a real bishop, with his arms in lawn sleeves, and his head in a wig. He had seen him walk, and heard him talk at a confirmation, on which momentous occasion Nathaniel Pipkin was so overcome with reverence and awe, when the aforesaid bishop laid his hand on his head, that he fainted right clean away, and was borne out of church in the arms of the beadle.

"This was a great event, a tremendous era, in Nathaniel Pipkin's life, and it was about the only

one that had ever occurred to ruffle the smooth current of his quiet existence, when happening one fine afternoon, in a fit of mental abstraction, to raise his eyes from the slate on which he was devising some tremendous problem in compound addition for an offending urchin to solve, they suddenly rested on the blooming countenance of Maria Lobbs, the only daughter of old Lobbs the great saddler over the way. Now, the eyes of Mr. Pipkin had rested on the pretty face of Maria Lobbs many a time and oft before, at church and elsewhere: but the eyes of Maria Lobbs had never looked so bright, the cheeks of Maria Lobbs had never looked so ruddy, as upon this particular occasion. No wonder then, that Nathaniel Pipkin was unable to take his eyes from the countenance of Miss Lobbs; no wonder that Miss Lobbs, finding herself stared at by a young man, withdrew her head from the window out of which she had been peeping, and shut the casement and pulled down the blind; no wonder that Nathaniel Pipkin, immediately thereafter, fell upon the young urchin who had previously offended, and cuffed and knocked him to his heart's content. All this was very natural, and there's nothing at all to wonder at about it.

"It *is* matter of wonder, though, that any one of Mr. Nathaniel Pipkin's retiring disposition, nervous temperament, and most particularly diminutive income, should from this day forth, have dared to aspire to the hand and heart of the only daughter of the fiery old Lobbs—of old Lobbs the great saddler, who could have bought up the whole village at one stroke of his pen, and never felt the outlay—old Lobbs, who was well known to have heaps of money, invested in the bank at the nearest market town—who was reported to have countless and inexhaustible treasures, hoarded up in the little iron safe with the big key-hole, over the chimney-piece in the back parlour—and who, it was well known,

on festive occasions garnished his board with a real silver tea-pot, cream ewer, and sugar-basin, which he was wont, in the pride of his heart, to boast should be his daughter's property when she found a man to her mind. I repeat it, to be a matter of profound astonishment and intense wonder, that Nathaniel Pipkin should have had the temerity to cast his eyes in this direction. But love is blind, and Nathaniel had a cast in his eye; and perhaps these two circumstances, taken together, prevented his seeing the matter in its proper light.

"Now, if old Lobbs had entertained the most remote or distant idea of the state of the affections of Nathaniel Pipkin, he would just have razed the school-room to the ground, or exterminated its master from the surface of the earth, or committed some other outrage and atrocity of an equally ferocious and violent description; for he was a terrible old fellow that Lobbs, when his pride was injured, or his blood was up. Swear! Such trains of oaths would come rolling and pealing over the way, sometimes when he was denouncing the idleness of the bony apprentice with the thin legs, that Nathaniel Pipkin would shake in his shoes with horror, and the hair of the pupils' heads would stand on end with fright.

"Well, day after day, when school was over, and the pupils gone, did Nathaniel Pipkin sit himself down at the front window, and while he feigned to be reading a book, throw sidelong glances over the way in search of the bright eyes of Maria Lobbs; and he hadn't sat there many days, before the bright eyes appeared at an upper window, apparently deeply engaged in reading too. This was delightful, and gladdening to the heart of Nathaniel Pipkin. It was something to sit there for hours together and look upon that pretty face when the eyes were cast down; but when Maria Lobbs began to raise her eyes from her book, and dart their rays

in the direction of Nathaniel Pipkin, his delight and admiration were perfectly boundless. At last, one day when he knew old Lobbs was out, Nathaniel Pipkin had the temerity to kiss his hand to Maria Lobbs; and Maria Lobbs, instead of shutting the window, and pulling down the blind, kissed *hers* to him, and smiled. Upon which Nathaniel Pipkin determined that come what might he would develope the state of his feelings, without farther delay.

A prettier foot, a gayer heart, a more dimpled face, or a smarter form, never bounded so lightly over the earth they graced, as did those of Maria Lobbs, the old saddler's daughter. There was a roguish twinkle in her sparkling eyes, that would have made its way to far less susceptible bosoms than that of Nathaniel Pipkin; and there was such a joyous sound in her merry laugh, that the sternest misanthrope must have smiled to hear it. Even old Lobbs himself in the very height of his ferocity, couldn't resist the coaxing of his pretty daughter; and when she, and her cousin Kate—an arch, impudent-looking, bewitching little person—made a dead set upon the old man together, as, to say the truth, they very often did, he could have refused them nothing, even had they asked for a portion of the countless and inexhaustible treasures, which were hidden from the light, in the iron safe.

"Nathaniel Pipkin's heart beat high within him, when he saw this enticing little couple some hundred yards before him, one summer's evening, in the very field in which he had many a time strolled about till night-time, and pondered on the beauty of Maria Lobbs. But though he had often thought then how briskly he would walk up to Maria Lobbs and tell her of his passion if he could only meet her, he felt, now that she was unexpectedly before him, all the blood in his body mounting to his face, manifestly to the great detriment of his legs, which, deprived of their usual portion, trembled beneath

him. When they stopped to gather a hedge flower, or listen to a bird, Nathaniel Pipkin stopped too, and pretended to be absorbed in meditation, as indeed he really was; for he was thinking what on earth he should ever do, when they turned back, as they inevitably must in time, and meet him face to face. But though he was afraid to make up to them, he couldn't bear to lose sight of them; so when they walked faster he walked faster, when they lingered he lingered, and when they stopped he stopped; and so they might have gone on, till the darkness prevented them, if Kate had not looked slyly back, and encouragingly beckoned Nathaniel to advance. There was something in Kate's manner that was not to be resisted, and so Nathaniel Pipkin complied with the invitation; and after a great deal of blushing on his part, and immoderate laughter on that of the wicked little cousin, Nathaniel Pipkin went down on his knees on the dewy grass and declared his resolution to remain there for ever, unless he was permitted to rise the accepted lover of Maria Lobbs Upon this, the merry laughter of Maria Lobbs rang through the calm evening air—without seeming to disturb it, though; it had such a pleasant sound—and the wicked little cousin laughed more immoderately than before, and Nathaniel Pipkin blushed deeper than ever. At length, Maria Lobbs being more strenuously urged by the love-worn little man, turned away her head, and whispered her cousin to say, or at all events Kate *did* say, that she felt much honoured by Mr. Pipkin's addresses, that her hand and heart were at her father's disposal, but that nobody could be insensible to Mr. Pipkin's merits. As all this was said with much gravity, and as Nathaniel Pipkin walked home with Maria Lobbs, and struggled for a kiss at parting, he went to bed a happy man, and dreamed all night long, of softening old Lobbs, opening the strong box, and marrying Maria.

"The next day, Nathaniel Pipkin saw old Lobbs go out upon his old gray pony, and after a great many signs at the window from the wicked little cousin, the object and meaning of which he could by no means understand, the bony apprentice with the thin legs came over to say that his master wasn't coming home all night, and that the ladies expected Mr. Pipkin to tea, at six o'clock precisely. How the lessons were got through that day, neither Nathaniel Pipkin nor his pupils knew any more than you do; but they were got through somehow, and, after the boys had gone, Nathaniel Pipkin took till full six o'clock to dress himself to his satisfaction; not that it took long to select the garments he should wear, inasmuch as he had no choice about the matter, but the putting them on to the best advantage, and touching them up previously, was a task of no inconsiderable difficulty or importance.

"There was a very snug little party, consisting of Maria Lobbs and her cousin Kate, and three or four romping, good-humoured, rosy-cheeked girls. Nathaniel Pipkin had ocular demonstration of the fact, that even the rumours of old Lobbs's treasures were not exaggerated. There were the real solid silver tea-pot, cream-ewer, and sugar-basin, on the table, and real silver spoons to stir the tea with, and real china cups to drink it out of, and plates of the same, to hold the cakes and toast in. The only eye-sore in the whole place, was another cousin of Maria Lobbs's, and brother of Kate, whom Maria Lobbs called 'Henry,' and who seemed to keep Maria Lobbs all to himself, up in one corner of the table. It's a delightful thing to see affection in families, but it may be carried rather too far, and Nathaniel Pipkin could not help thinking that Maria Lobbs must be very particularly fond of her relations, if she paid as much attention to all of them as to this individual cousin. After tea, too, when the wicked little cousin proposed a game at

blind man's buff, it somehow or other happened that Nathaniel Pipkin was nearly always blind, and whenever he laid his hand upon the male cousin, he was sure to find that Maria Lobbs was not far off. And though the wicked little cousin and the other girls pinched him, and pulled his hair, and pushed chairs in his way, and all sorts of things, Maria Lobbs never seemed to come near him at all; and once—once—Nathaniel Pipkin could have sworn he heard the sound of a kiss, followed by a faint remonstrance from Maria Lobbs, and a half-suppressed laugh from her female friends. All this was odd—very odd—and there is no saying what Nathaniel Pipkin might or might not have done, in consequence, if his thoughts had not been suddenly directed into a new channel.

"The circumstance which directed his thoughts into a new channel was a loud knocking at the street-door, and the person who made this loud knocking at the street door, was no other than old Lobbs himself, who had unexpectedly returned, and was hammering away, like a coffin-maker: for he wanted his supper. The alarming intelligence was no sooner communicated by the bony apprentice with the thin legs, than the girls tripped up stairs to Maria Lobbs's bed-room, and the male cousin and Nathaniel Pipkin were thrust into a couple of closets in the sitting-room, for want of any better places of concealment; and when Maria Lobbs and the wicked little cousin had stowed them away, and put the room to rights, they opened the street-door to old Lobbs, who had never left off knocking since he first began.

"Now it did unfortunately happen that old Lobbs being very hungry was monstrous cross. Nathaniel Pipkin could hear him growling away like an old mastiff with a sore throat; and whenever the unfortunate apprentice with the thin legs came into the room, so surely did old Lobbs commence swear-

ing at him in a most Saracenic and ferocious manner, though apparently with no other end or object than that of easing his bosom by the discharge of a few superfluous oaths. At length some supper, which had been warming up, was placed on the table, and then old Lobbs fell to, in regular style; and, having made clear work of it in no time, kissed his daughter, and demanded his pipe.

"Nature had placed Nathaniel Pipkin's knees in very close juxtaposition, but when he heard old Lobbs demand his pipe, they knocked together, as if they were going to reduce each other to powder; for, depending from a couple of hooks, in the very closet in which he stood, was a large brown-stemmed, silver-bowled pipe, which pipe he himself had seen in the mouth of old Lobbs, regularly every afternoon and evening, for the last five years. The two girls went down stairs for the pipe, and up stairs for the pipe, and every where but where they knew the pipe was, and old Lobbs stormed away mean while, in the most wonderful manner. At last he thought of the closet, and walked up to it. It was of no use a little man like Nathaniel Pipkin pulling the door inwards, when a great strong fellow like old Lobbs was pulling it outwards. Old Lobbs just gave it one tug, and open it flew, disclosing Nathaniel Pipkin standing bolt upright inside, and shaking with apprehension from head to foot. Bless us! what an appalling look old Lobbs gave him, as he dragged him out by the collar, and held him at arm's length.

"'Why, what do you want here?' said old Lobbs, in a fearful voice.

"Nathaniel Pipkin could make no reply, so old Lobbs shook him backwards and forwards, for two or three minutes, by way of arranging his ideas for him.

"'What do you want here?'' roared Lobbs, 'I suppose *you* have come after my daughter, now.'

"Old Lobbs merely said this as a sneer; for he did not believe that mortal presumption could have carried Nathaniel Pipkin so far. What was his indignation when that poor man replied—

"'Yes, I did Mr. Lobbs—I did come after your daughter. I love her, Mr. Lobbs.'

"'Why you snivelling, wry-faced little villain,' gasped old Lobbs, paralyzed at the atrocious confession; 'what do you mean by that? Say this to my face! Why, I'll throttle you.'

"It is by no means improbable, that old Lobbs would have carried his threat into execution, in the excess of his rage, if his arm had not been stayed by a very unexpected apparition, to wit, the male cousin, who stepping out of his closet, and walking up to old Lobbs, said—

"'I cannot allow this harmless person, sir, who has been asked here, in some girlish frolic, to take upon himself, in a very noble manner, the fault (if fault it is) which I am guilty of, and am ready to avow. *I* love your daughter, sir; and *I* came here for the purpose of meeting her.'

"Old Lobbs opened his eyes very wide at this, but not wider than Nathaniel Pipkin.

"'You did?' said Lobbs: at last finding breath to speak.

"'I did.'

"'And I forbade you this house, long ago.'

"'You did, or I should not have been here, clandestinely, to-night.'

"I am sorry to record it of old Lobbs, but I think he would have struck the cousin, if his pretty daughter, with her bright eyes swimming in tears, had not clung to his arm.

"'Don't stop him, Maria,' said the young man: 'if he has the will to strike me, let him. I would not hurt a hair of his gray head, for the riches of the world.'

"The old man cast down his eyes at this reproof,

and they met those of his daughter: I have hinted once or twice before that they were very bright eyes, and though they were tearful now, their influence was by no means lessened. Old Lobbs turned his head away, as if to avoid being persuaded by them, when, as fortune would have it, he encountered the face of the wicked little cousin, who, half afraid for her brother, and half laughing at Nathaniel Pipkin, presented as bewitching an expression of countenance with a touch of slyness in it too, as any man, old or young, need look upon. She drew her arm coaxingly through the old man's and whispered something in his ear; and do what he would, old Lobbs couldn't help breaking out into a smile, while a tear stole down his cheek, at the same time.

"Five minutes after this, the girls were brought down from the bed-room with a great deal of giggling and modesty; and while the young people were making themselves perfectly happy, old Lobbs got down the pipe, and smoked it; and it was a remarkable circumstance about that particular pipe of tobacco, that it was the most soothing and lightful one he ever smoked.

"Nathaniel Pipkin thought it best to keep his own counsel, and by so doing gradually rose into high favour with old Lobbs, who taught him to smoke in time; and they used to sit out in the garden on the fine evenings, for many years afterwards, smoking and drinking in great state. He soon recovered the effects of his attachment, for we find his name in the parish register, as a witness to the marriage of Maria Lobbs to her cousin; and it also appears, by reference to other documents, that on the night of the wedding, he was incarcerated in the village cage, for having in a state of extreme intoxication, committed sundry excesses in the streets, in all of which he was aided and abetted by the bony apprentice with the thin legs."

CHAPTER XVIII.

BRIEFLY ILLUSTRATIVE OF TWO POINTS;—FIRST, THE POWER OF HYSTERICS, AND, SECONDLY, THE FORCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

For two days after the *dejeune* at Mrs. Hunter's, the Pickwickians remained at Eatanswill, anxiously awaiting the arrival of some intelligence from their revered leader. Mr. Tupman and Mr. Snodgrass were once again left to their own means of amusement; for Mr. Winkle, in compliance with a most pressing invitation, continued to residé at Mr. Pott's house, and devote his time to the companionship of his amiable lady. Nor was the occasional society of Mr. Pott himself, wanting to complete their felicity. Deeply immersed in the intensity of hisspeculations for the public weal, and the destruction of the Independent, it was not the habit of that great man to descend from his mental pinnacle to the humble level of ordinary minds. On this occasion, however, and as if expressly in compliment to any follower of Mr. Pickwick's he unbent, relaxed, stepped down from his pedestal, and walked upon the ground: benignly adapting his remarks to the comprehension of the herd, and seeming in outward form, if not in spirit, to be one of them.

Such having been the demeanour of this celebrated public character towards Mr. Winkle, it will

be readily imagined that considerable surprise was depicted on the countenance of the latter gentleman, when, as he was sitting alone in the breakfast-room, the door was hastily thrown open, and as hastily closed, on the entrance of Mr. Pott, who, stalking majestically towards him, and thrusting aside his proffered hand, ground his teeth, as if to put a sharper edge on what he was about to utter, and exclaimed, in a saw-like voice,—

"Serpent!"

"Sir!" exclaimed Mr. Winkle, starting from his chair.

"Serpent, sir," repeated Mr. Pott, raising his voice, and then suddenly depressing it; "I said, Serpent, sir—make the most of it."

Now when you have parted with a man, at two o'clock in the morning, on terms of the utmost good fellowship, and he meets you again at half-past nine, and greets you as a serpent, it is not unreasonable to conclude that something of an unpleasant nature has occurred mean while. So Mr. Winkle thought. He returned Mr. Pott's gaze of stone, and in compliance with that gentleman's request, proceeded to make the most he could of the "serpent." The most, however, was just nothing at all; so, after a profound silence of some minutes' duration, he said,—

"Serpent, sir! Serpent, Mr. Pott! What can you mean, sir?—this is pleasantry."

"Pleasantry, sir!" exclaimed Pott, with a motion of the hand, indicative of a strong desire to hurl the Britannia metal tea-pot at the head of his visiter. "Pleasantry, sir!——but no, I will be calm; I will be calm, sir;" and in proof of his calmness, Mr. Pott flung himself into a chair, and foamed at the mouth.

"My dear sir," interposed Mr. Winkle.

"*Dear* sir!" replied Pott. "How dare you ad-

dress me, as dear sir, sir? How dare you look me in the face and do it?"

"Well, sir, if you come to that," responded Mr. Winkle, "how dare you look *me* in the face, and call me a serpent, sir?"

"Because you are one," replied Mr. Pott.

"Prove it, sir," said Mr. Winkle, warmly. "Prove it."

A malignant scowl passed over the profound face of the editor, as he drew from his pocket the Independent of that morning; and laying his finger on a particular paragraph, threw the journal across the table to Mr. Winkle.

That gentleman took it up, and read as follows:—

"Our obscure and filthy contemporary, in some disgusting observations on the recent election, for this borough, has presumed to violate the hallowed sanctity of private life, and to refer, in a manner not to be misunderstood, to the personal affairs of our late candidate—ay, and notwithstanding his base defeat, we will add, our future member, Mr. Fizkin. What does our dastardly contemporary mean? What would the ruffian say, if we, setting at naught, like him, the decencies of social intercourse, were to raise the curtain which happily conceals *his* private life from general ridicule, not to say from general execration? What, if we were even to point out, and comment on, facts and circumstances which are publicly notorious, and beheld by every one, but our mole-eyed contemporary—what if we were to print the following effusion, which we received while we were writing the commencement of this article, from a talented fellow-townsman and correspondent:—

"'LINES TO A BRASS POT.

"'Oh Pott! if you'd known
How false she'd have grown,

When you heard the marriage bell's tinkle;
You'd have done then, I vow,
What you cannot help now,
And handed her over to W*****."

"What," said Mr. Pott, solemnly—"what rhymes to 'tinkle,' villain?"

"What rhymes to tinkle?" said Mrs. Pott, whose entrance at the moment forestalled the reply. "What rhymes to tinkle? Why, Winkle, I should conceive:" and saying this, Mrs. Pott smiled sweetly on the disturbed Pickwickian, and extended her hand towards him. The agitated young man would have accepted it, in his confusion, had not Pott indignantly interposed.

"Back, ma'am—back," said the editor. "Take his hand before my very face!"

"Mr. P.!" said his astonished lady.

"Wretched woman, look here," exclaimed the husband. "Look here, ma'am—'Lines to a brass Pot,' ma'am. 'Brass pot;'—that's me, ma'am. 'False *she'd* have grown;'—that's you, ma'am—you." With this ebullition of rage, which was not unaccompanied with something like a tremble, at the expression of his wife's face, Mr. Pott dashed the current number of the Eatanswill Independent at her feet.

"Upon my word, sir," said the astonished Mrs. Pott, stooping to pick up the paper. "Upon my word, sir."

Mr. Pott winced beneath the contemptuous gaze of his wife. He had made a desperate struggle to screw up his courage, but it was fast coming unscrewed again.

There appears nothing very tremendous in this little sentence, "Upon my word, sir," when it comes to be read; but the tone of voice in which it was delivered, and the look that accompanied it, both seeming to bear reference to some revenge to be

thereafter wreaked upon the head of Pott, produced their full effect upon him. The most unskilful observer could have detected in his troubled countenance, a readiness to resign his Wellington boots to any efficient substitute who would have consented to stand in them at that moment.

Mrs. Pott read the paragraph, uttered a loud shriek, and threw herself at full length on the hearth-rug, screaming, and tapping it with the heels of her shoes, in a manner which could leave no doubt of the propriety of her feelings on the occasion.

"My dear," said the terrified Pott,—"I didn't say I believed it;—I——" but the unfortunate man's voice was drowned in the screaming of his partner.

"Mrs. Pott, let me entreat you, my dear ma'am, to compose yourself," said Mr. Winkle; but the shrieks and tappings were louder, and more frequent, than ever.

"My dear," said Mr. Pott, "I am very sorry. If you won't consider your own health, consider me, my dear. We shall have a crowd round the house."

But the more strenuously Mr. Pott entreated, the more vehemently the screams poured forth.

Very fortunately, however, attached to Mrs. Pott's person was a body-guard of one ——: a young lady whose ostensible employment was to preside over her toilet, but who rendered herself useful in a variety of ways, and in none more so than in the particular department of constantly aiding and abetting her mistress in every wish and inclination opposed to the desires of the unhappy Pott. The screams reached this young lady's ears in due course, and brought her to the room with a speed which threatened to derange materially, the very exquisite arrangement of her cap and ringlets.

"Oh, my dear, dear mistress!" exclaimed the body-guard, kneeling frantically by the side of the

prostrate Mrs. Pott. "Oh, my dear mistress, what is the matter?"

"Your master—your brutal master," murmured the patient.

Pott was evidently giving way.

"It's a shame," said the body-guard, reproachfully. "I know he'll be the death on you, ma'am. Poor dear thing."

He gave way more. The opposite party followed up the attack.

"Oh, don't leave me—don't leave, Goodwin," murmured Mrs. Pott, clutching at the wrists of the said Goodwin, with an hysteric jerk. "You're the only person that's kind to me, Goodwin."

At this affecting appeal, Goodwin got up a little domestic tragedy of her own, and shed tears copiously.

"Never, ma'am—never," said Goodwin. "Oh, sir, you should be careful—you should indeed; you don't know what harm you may do Missis; you'll be sorry for it one day, I know—I've always said so."

The unlucky Pott looked timidly on, but said nothing.

"Goodwin," said Mrs. Pott, in a soft voice.

"Ma'am," said Goodwin.

"If you only knew how I have loved that man——"

"Don't distress yourself by recollecting it, ma'am," said the body-guard.

Pott looked very frightened. It was time for a clencher.

"And now," sobbed Mrs. Pott—"now, after all, to be treated in this way; to be reproached and insulted in the presence of a third party, and that party almost a stranger. But I will not submit to it, Goodwin," continued Mrs. Pott raising herself in the arms of her attendant. "My brother, the

Lieutenant, shall interfere. I'll be separated, Goodwin."

"It would certainly serve him right, ma'am," said Goodwin.

Whatever thoughts the threat of a separation might have awakened in Mr. Pott's mind, he forbore to give utterance to them, and contented himself by saying with great humility,—

"My dear, will you hear me?"

A fresh train of sobs was the only reply, as Mrs. Pott grew more hysterical, requested to be informed why she was ever born, and required sundry other pieces of information of a similar description.

"My dear," remonstrated Mr. Pott, "do not give way to these sensitive feelings. I never believed that the paragraph had any foundation, my dear—impossible. I was only angry, my dear—I may say outrageous—with the Independent people for daring to insert it; that's all;" and Mr. Pott cast an imploring look at the innocent cause of the mischief, as if to entreat him to say nothing about the serpent.

"And what steps, sir, do you mean to take to obtain redress?" inquired Mr. Winkle, gaining courage as he saw Pott losing it.

"Oh, Goodwin," observed Mrs. Pott, "does he mean to horsewhip the editor of the Independent—does he, Goodwin?"

"Hush, hush, ma'am; pray keep yourself quiet," replied the body-guard. "I dare say he will, if you wish it, ma'am."

"Certainly," said Pott, as his wife evinced decided symptoms of going off again—"of course I shall."

"When, Goodwin—when?" said Mrs. Pott, still undecided about the going off.

"Immediately, of course," said Mr. Pott; "before the day is out."

"Oh, Goodwin," resumed Mrs. Pott, "it's the only way of meeting the slanderer, and setting me right with the world."

"Certainly, ma'am," replied Goodwin. "No man as is a man, ma'am, could refuse to do it."

So as the hysterics were still hovering about, Mr. Pott said once more, that he would do it; but Mrs. Pott was so overcome at the bare idea of having ever been suspected, that she was half-a-dozen times on the very verge of a relapse, and most unquestionably would have gone off, had it not been for the indefatigable efforts of the assiduous Goodwin, and repeated entreaties for pardon from the conquered Pott; and finally, when that unhappy individual had been frightened and snubbed down to his proper level, Mrs. Pott recovered, and they went to breakfast.

"You will not allow this base newspaper slander to shorten your stay here, Mr. Winkle?" said Mrs. Pott, smiling through the traces of her tears.

"I hope not," said Mr. Pott, actuated, as he spoke, by an internal wish that his visiter would choke himself with the morsel of dry toast which he was raising to his lips at the moment: and so terminate his stay effectually.

"I hope not."

"You are very good," said Mr. Winkle; "but a letter has been received from Mr. Pickwick—so I learn by a note from Mr. Tupman, which was brought up to my bed-room door, this morning—in which he requests us to join him at Bury to-day; and we are to leave by the coach at noon."

"But you will come back," said Mrs. Pott.

"Oh, certainly," replied Mr. Winkle.

"You are quite sure?" said Mrs. Pott, stealing a tender look at her visiter.

"Quite," responded Mr. Winkle.

The breakfast passed off in silence, for each

member of the party was brooding over his or her own personal grievances. Mrs. Pott was regretting the loss of a beau; Mr. Pott his rash pledge to horse-whip the Independent; and Mr. Winkle his having placed himself in so awkward a situation. Noon approached, and after many adieux and promises to return, he tore himself away.

"If he ever comes back, I'll poison him," thought Mr. Pott, as he turned into the little back office where he prepared his thunderbolts.

"If I ever do come back, and mix myself up with these people again," thought Mr. Winkle, as he wended his way to the Peacock, "I shall deserve to be horsewhipped myself—that's all."

His friends were ready, the coach was nearly so, and in half an hour they were proceeding on their journey, along the road over which Mr. Pickwick and Sam had so recently travelled, and of which, as we have already said something, we do not feel called upon to extract Mr. Snodgrass's poetical and beautiful description.

Mr. Weller was standing at the door of the Angel, ready to receive them, and by that gentleman they were ushered to the apartment of Mr. Pickwick, where, to the no small surprise of Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass, and the no small embarrassment of Mr. Tupman, they found old Wardle and Trundle.

"How are you?" said the old man, grasping Mr. Tupman's hand. "Don't hang back, or look sentimental about it; it can't be helped, old fellow. For her sake, I wish you'd had her; for your own, I'm very glad you have not. A young fellow like you, will do better one of these days—eh?" With this consolation, old Wardle slapped Mr. Tupman on the back, and laughed heartily.

"Well, and how are you, my fine fellows?" said the old gentleman, shaking hands with Mr. Win-

kle and Mr. Snodgrass at the same time. "I have just been telling Pickwick that we must have you all down at Christmas. We're going to have a wedding—a real wedding this time."

"A wedding!" exclaimed Mr. Snodgrass, turning very pale.

"Yes, a wedding. But don't be frightened," said the good-humoured old man; "it's only Trundle there, and Bella."

"Oh, is that all?" said Mr. Snodgrass, relieved from a painful doubt which had fallen heavily on his breast. "Give you joy, sir. How is Joe?"

"Oh, he;—very well," replied the old gentleman. "Sleepy as ever."

"And your mother, and the clergyman, and all of 'em?"

"Quite well."

"Where," said Mr. Tupman, with an effort—"where is—*she*, sir?" and he turned away his head, and covered his eyes with his hand.

"*She!*" said the old gentleman, with a knowing shake of the head. "Do you mean my single relative—eh?"

Mr. Tupman, by a nod, intimated that his question aplied to the disappointed Rachael.

"Oh, she's gone away," said the old gentleman. "She's living at a relation's far enough off. She couldn't bear to see the girls, so I let her go. But come, here's the dinner. You must be hungry after your ride. I am, without any ride at all; so let us fall to."

Ample justice was done to the meal; and when they were seated round the table, after it had been disposed of, Mr. Pickwick to the intense horror and indignation of his followers, related the adventure he had undergone, and the success which had attended the base artifices of the diabolical Jingle.

"And the attack of rheumatism which I caught in that garden," said Mr. Pickwick, in conclusion, "renders me lame at this moment."

"I, too, have had something of an adventure," said Mr. Winkle, with a smile; and, at the request of Mr. Pickwick, he detailed the malicious libel of the Eatanswill Independent, and the consequent excitement of their friend, the editor.

Mr. Pickwick's brow darkened, during the recital. His friends observed it, and, when Mr. Winkle had concluded, maintained a profound silence. Mr. Pickwick struck the table emphatically with his clenched fist, and spoke as follows:

"Is it not a wonderful circumstance," said Mr. Pickwick, "that we seem destined to enter no man's house, without involving him in some degree of trouble? Does it not, I ask, bespeak the indiscretion, or, worse than that, the blackness of heart—that I should say so!—of my followers, that, beneath whatever roof they locate, they disturb the peace of mind and happiness of some confiding female? Is it not, I say——."

Mr. Pickwick would in all probability have gone on for some time, had not the entrance of Sam, with a letter, caused him to break off in his eloquent discourse. He passed his handkerchief across his forehead, took off his spectacles, wiped them, and put them on again; and his voice had recovered its wonted softness of tone, when he said,—

"What have you there, Sam?"

"Called at the Post-office just now, and found this here letter, as has laid there for two days," replied Mr. Weller. "It's sealed vith a vafer, and directed in round hand."

"I don't know this hand," said Mr. Pickwick, opening the letter. "Mercy on us! what's this? It must be a jest; it—it—can't be true."

"What's the matter?" was the general inqui

"Nobody dead, is there?" said Wardle, alarmed at the horror in Mr. Pickwick's countenance.

Mr. Pickwick made no reply, but pushing the letter across the table, and desiring Mr. Tupman to read it aloud, fell back in his chair with a look of vacant astonishment quite alarming to behold.

Mr. Tupman, with a trembling voice, read the letter, of which the following is a copy:—

"Freeman's Court, Cornhill,
August 28th, 1830.
Bardell against Pickwick.

Sir,

Having been instructed by Mrs. Martha Bardell, to commence an action against you, for a breach of promise of marriage, for which the plaintiff lays her damages at fifteen hundred pounds, we beg to inform you that a writ has been issued against you, in this suit, in the Court of Common Pleas; and request to know, by return of post, the name of your attorney in London, who will accept service thereof.

We are, sir,
Your obedient servants,
Dodson and Fogg.

Mr. Samuel Pickwick.

There was something so impressive in the mute astonishment with which each man regarded his neighbour, and every man regarded Mr. Pickwick, that all seemed afraid to speak. The silence was at length broken by Mr. Tupman.

"Dodson and Fogg," he repeated mechanically.

"Bardell and Pickwick," said Mr. Snodgrass, musing.

"Peace of mind and happiness of confiding females, murmured Mr. Winkle, with an air of abstraction.

"It's a conspiracy," said Mr. Pickwick, at length recovering the power of speech;—"a base conspiracy between these two grasping attorneys, Dodson and Fogg. Mrs. Bardell would never do it;—she hasn't the heart to do it;—she hasn't the case to do it. Ridiculous—ridiculous."

"Of her heart," said Wardle, with a smile, "you should certainly be the best judge. I don't wish to discourage you, but I should certainly say of her case. Dodson and Fogg are far better judges than any of us can be."

"It's a vile attempt to extort money," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I hope it is," said Wardle with a short dry cough.

"Who ever heard me address her in any way but that in which a lodger would address his landlady?" continued Mr. Pickwick, with great vehemence. "Who ever saw me with her? Not even my friends here——"

"Except on one occasion," said Mr. Tupman.

Mr. Pickwick changed colour.

"Ah," said Wardle. "Well, that's important. There was nothing suspicious then, I suppose?"

Mr. Tupman glanced timidly at his leader. "Why," he said, "there was nothing suspicious; but—I don't know how it happened, mind—she certainly was reclining in his arms."

"Gracious powers!" ejaculated Mr. Pickwick, as the recollection of the scene in question struck forcibly upon him;—"what a dreadful instance of the force of circumstances! So she was—so she was."

"And our friend was soothing her anguish," said Mr. Winkle, rather maliciously.

"So I was," said Mr. Pickwick; "I won't deny it. So I was."

"Hallo!" said Wardle: "for a case in which there's nothing suspicious, this looks rather queer—eh, Pickwick—eh? Ah, sly dog—sly dog!" and he laughed till the glasses on the side-board rang again.

"What a dreadful conjunction of appearances!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, resting his chin upon his hands. "Winkle—Tupman I beg your pardon for the observations I made just now. We are all the victims of circumstances, and I the greatest." With this apology, Mr. Pickwick buried his head in his hands, and ruminated; while Wardle measured out a regular circle of nods and winks, addressed to the other members of the company.

"I'll have it explained though," said Mr. Pickwick raising his head, and hammering the table. "I'll see this Dodson and Fogg. I'll go to London to-morrow."

"Not to-morrow," said Wardle; "you're too lame."

"Well then, next day."

"Next day is the first of September, and you're pledged to ride out with us, as far as Sir Geoffrey Manning's grounds, at all events to meet us at lunch, if you don't take the field."

"Well then, the day after," said Mr. Pickwick; "Thursday.—Sam."

"Sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Take two places outside to London, on Thursday morning, for yourself and me."

"Werry well, sir."

Mr. Weller left the room, and departed slowly on his errand, with his hands in his pocket, and his eyes fixed on the ground.

"Rum feller, the hemperor," said Mr. Weller, as he walked slowly up the street. "Think o' his makin' up to that ere Mrs. Bardell—vith a little boy, too! Always the vay vith these here old 'uns hows'ever, as is such steady goers to look at. I didn't think he'd ha' done it, though—I didn't think he'd ha' done it. After moralizing in this strain, Mr. Samuel Weller bent his steps towards the booking-office.

CHAPTER XIX.

A PLEASANT DAY, WITH AN UNPLEASANT TERMINATION.

The birds, who, happily for their own peace of mind, and personal comfort, were in blissful ignorance of the preparations which had been making to astonish them, on the first of September, hailed it, no doubt, as one of the pleasantest mornings they had seen that season. Many a young partridge who strutted complacently among the stubble, with all the finicking coxcombry of youth, and many an older one who watched his levity out of his little round eye, with the contemptuous air of a bird of wisdom and experience, alike unconscious of their approaching doom, basked in the fresh morning air with lively and blithesome feelings, and a few hours afterwards were laid low upon the earth. But we grow affecting: let us proceed.

In plain common-place matter of fact, then, it was a fine morning—so fine that you would scarcely have believed that the few months of an English summer had yet flown by. Hedges, fields, and trees, hill and moorland, presented to the eye their ever-varying shades of deep rich green: scarce a leaf had fallen, scarce a sprinkle of yellow mingled with the hues of summer warned you that autumn had begun. The sky was cloudless; the sun shone out bright and warm; the songs of birds, and hum of myriads of summer insects, filled the air; and the cottage gardens, crowded with flowers of every

rich and beautiful tint, sparkled in the heavy dew, like beds of glittering jewels. Every thing bore the stamp of summer, and none of its beautiful colours had yet faded from the dye.

Such was the morning, when an open carriage, in which were three Pickwickians, (Mr. Snodgrass having preferred to remain at home,) Mr. Wardle, and Mr. Trundle, with Sam Weller on the box beside the driver, pulled up by a gate at the road-side, before which stood a tall, raw-boned gamekeeper, and a half-booted, leather-leggined boy: each bearing a bag of capacious dimensions, and accompanied by a brace of pointers.

"I say," whispered Mr. Winkle to Wardle, as the man let down the steps, "they don't suppose we're going to kill game enough to fill those bags, do they?"

"Fill them!" exclaimed old Wardle. "Bless you, yes! You shall fill one, and I the other; and when we've done with them, the pockets of our shooting-jackets will hold as much more."

Mr. Winkle dismounted without saying any thing in reply to this observation; but he thought within himself, that if the party remained in the open air, till he had filled one of the bags, they stood a considerable chance of catching tolerable colds in the head.

"Hi, Juno, lass—hi, old girl; down, Daph, down," said Wardle, caressing the dogs. "Sir Geoffrey still in Scotland, of course, Martin?"

The tall gamekeeper replied in the affirmative, and looked with some surprise from Mr. Winkle, who was holding his gun as if he wished his coat pocket to save him the trouble of pulling the trigger, to Mr. Tupman, who was holding his, as if he were afraid of it—as there is no earthly reason to doubt that he really was.

"My friends are not much in the way of this sort of thing yet, Martin," said Wardle, noticing

the look. "Live and learn, you know. They'll be good shots one of these days. I beg my friend Winkle's pardon, though; he has had some practice."

Mr. Winkle smiled feebly over his blue neckerchief in acknowledgment of the compliment, and got himself so mysteriously entangled with his gun, in his modest confusion, that if the piece had been loaded, he must inevitably have shot himself dead upon the spot.

"You mustn't handle your piece in that ere way, when you come to have the charge in it, sir," said the tall gamekeeper gruffly, "or you'll make cold meat of some on us."

Mr. Winkle, thus admonished, abruptly altered its position, and in so doing, contrived to bring the barrel into pretty smart contact with Mr. Weller's head.

"Hallo!" said Sam, picking up his hat, which had been knocked off, and rubbing his temple. "Hallo, sir! if you comes it this vay, you'll fill one o' them bags, and something to spare, at one fire."

Here the leather-leggined boy laughed very heartily, and then tried to look as if it was somebody else, whereat Mr. Winkle frowned majestically.

"Where did you tell the boy to meet us with the snack, Martin?" inquired Wardle.

"Side of One-tree Hill, at twelve o'clock, sir."

"That's not sir Geoffrey's land, is it?"

"No, sir; but it's close by it. It's Captain Boldwig's land; but there'll be nobody to interrupt us, and there's a fine bit of turf there."

"Very well," said old Wardle. "Now the sooner we're off the better. Will you join us at twelve, then, Pickwick?"

Mr. Pickwick was particularly desirous to view the sport, the more especially as he was rather anxious in respect of Mr. Winkle's life and limbs.

On so inviting a morning, too, it was very tantalizing to turn back, and leave his friends to enjoy themselves. It was, therefore, with a very rueful air that he replied,—

"Why, I suppose I must."

"An't the gentleman a shot, sir?" inquired the long gamekeeper.

"No," replied Wardle; "and he's lame besides."

"I should very much like to go," said Mr. Pickwick—"very much."

There was a short pause of commiseration.

"There's a barrow t'other side the hedge," said the boy. If the gentleman's servant would wheel along the paths, he could keep nigh us, and we could lift it over the stiles and that."

"The werry thing," said Mr. Weller, who was a party interested, inasmuch as he ardently longed to see the sport. "The werry thing. Well said, Small-check; I'll have it out in a minute."

But here a difficulty arose. The long gamekeeper resolutely protested against the introduction into a shooting-party, of a gentleman in a barrow, as a gross violation of all established rules and precedents.

It was a great objection, but not an insurmountable one. The gamekeeper having been coaxed and feed, and having, moreover, eased his mind by "punching" the head of the inventive youth who had first suggested the use of the machine, Mr. Pickwick was placed in it, and off the party set; Wardle and the long gamekeeper leading the way, and Mr. Pickwick in the barrow, propelled by Sam, bringing up the rear.

"Stop, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, when they had got half across the first field.

"What's the matter now?" said Wardle.

"I won't suffer this barrow to be moved another step," said Mr. Pickwick, resolutely, "unless Winkle carries that gun of his, in a different manner."

"How *am* I to carry it?" said the wretched Winkle.

"Carry it with the muzzle to the ground," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"It's so unsportsman-like," reasoned Winkle.

"I don't care whether it's unsportsman-like or not," replied Mr. Pickwick; "I am not going to be shot in a wheelbarrow, for the sake of appearances, to please any body."

"I know the gentleman 'll put that ere charge into somebody afore he's done," growled the long man.

"Well, well—I don't mind," said poor Mr. Winkle, turning his gun stock uppermost;—"there."

"Any thin' for a quiet life," said Mr. Weller; and on they went again.

"Stop," said Mr. Pickwick, after they had gone a few yards farther.

"What now?" said Wardle.

"That gun of Tupman's is not safe: I know it isn't," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Eh? What! not safe?" said Mr. Tupman in a tone of great alarm.

"Not as you are carrying it," said Mr. Pickwick. "I am very sorry to make any farther objection, but I cannot consent to go on, unless you carry it, as Winkle does his."

"I think you had better, sir," said the long gamekeeper, "or you're quite as likely to lodge the charge in your own vestcoat as any body else's."

Mr. Tupman, with the most obliging haste, placed his piece in the position required, and the party moved on again; the two amateurs marched with reversed arms, like a couple of privates at a royal funeral.

The dogs suddenly came to a dead stop, and the party advancing stealthily a single pace, stopped too.

"What's the matter with the dogs' legs?" whispered Mr. Winkle. "How queer they're standing."

"Hush, can't you?" replied Wardle, softly. "Don't you see, they're making a point?"

"Making a point!" said Mr. Winkle, staring about him, as if he expected some particular beauty in the landscape, which the sagacious animals were calling special attention to. "Making apoint! What are they pointing at?"

"Keep your eyes open," said Wardle, not heeding the question in the excitement of the moment. "Now then."

There was a sharp whirring noise, that made Mr. Winkle start back as if he had been shot himself. Bang, bang, went a couple of guns;—the smoke swept quickly away over the field, and curled into the air.

"Where are they?" said Mr. Winkle, in a state of the highest excitement, turning round and round in all directions. "Where are they? Tell me when to fire. Where are they—where are they?"

"Where are they!" said Wardle, taking up a brace of birds which the dogs had deposited at his feet. "Where are they! Why, here they are."

"No, no; I mean the others," said the bewildered Winkle.

"Far enough off, by this time," replied Wardle, coolly reloading his gun.

"We shall very likely be up with another covey in five minutes," said the long gamekeeper. "If the gentleman begins to fire now, perhaps he'll just get the shot out of the barrel by the time they rise."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Mr. Weller.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, compassionating his follower's confusion and embarrassment.

"Sir."

"Don't laugh."

"Certainly not, sir." So, by way of indemnifi-

cation, Mr. Weller contorted his features from behind the wheelbarrow, for the exclusive amusement of the boy with the leggings, who thereupon burst into a boisterous laugh, and was summarily cuffed by the long gamekeeper, who wanted a pretext for turning round, to hide his own merriment.

"Bravo, old fellow!" said Wardle to Mr. Tupman; "you fired that time at all events."

"Oh yes," replied Mr. Tupman, with conscious pride. "I let it off."

"Well done. You'll hit something next time, if you look sharp. Very easy, ain't it?"

"Yes, it's very easy," said Mr. Tupman. "How it hurts one's shoulder, though. It nearly knocked me backwards. I had no idea these small fire-arms kicked so."

"Ah," said the old gentleman, smiling; "you'll get used to it, in time. Now then—all ready—all right with the barrow there?"

"All right, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Come along then."

"Hold hard, sir," said Sam, raising the barrow.

"Ay, ay," replied Mr. Pickwick; and on they went, as briskly as need be.

"Keep that barrow back now," cried Wardle, when it had been hoisted over a stile into another field, and Mr. Pickwick had been deposited in it once more.

"All right, sir," replied Mr. Weller, pausing.

"Now, Winkle," said the old gentleman, "follow me softly, and don't be too late this time."

"Never fear," said Mr. Winkle. "Are they pointing?"

"No, no; not now. Quietly now, quietly." On they crept, and very quietly they would have advanced, if Mr. Winkle, in the performance of some very intricate evolutions with his gun, had not ac-

cidentally fired, at the most critical moment, over the boy's head, exactly in the very spot where the tall man's brain would have been, had he been there instead.

"Why, what on earth did you do that for?" said old Wardle, as the birds flew unharmed away.

"I never saw such a gun in my life," replied poor Winkle, looking at the lock, as if that would do any good. "It goes off, of its own accord. It *will* do it."

"Will do it!" echoed Wardle, with something of irritation in his manner. "I wish it would kill something of its own accord."

"It'll do that afore long, sir," observed the tall man, in a low, prophetic voice.

"What do you mean by that observation, sir?" inquired Mr. Winkle, angrily.

"Never mind, sir—never mind," replied the long gamekeeper;—"I've no family myself, sir; and this here boy's mother will get something handsome from Sir Geoffrey, if he's killed on his land. Load again, sir—load again."

"Take away his gun," cried Mr. Pickwick from the barrow, horror-stricken at the long man's dark insinuations. "Take away his gun, do you hear, somebody?"

Nobody, however, volunteered to obey the command; and Mr. Winkle, after darting a rebellious glance at Mr. Pickwick, reloaded his gun, and proceeded onwards with the rest.

We are bound, on the authority of Mr. Pickwick, to state, that Mr. Tupman's mode of proceeding evinced far more of prudence and deliberation, than that adopted by Mr. Winkle. Still, this by no means detracts from the great authority of the latter gentleman, on all matters connected with the field; because, as Mr. Pickwick beautifully observes, it has somehow or other happened,

from time immemorial, that many of the best and ablest philosophers, who have been perfect lights of science in matters of theory, have been wholly unable to reduce them to practice.

"Mr. Tupman's process, like many of our most sublime discoveries, was extremely simple. With the quickness and penetration of a man of genius, he had at once observed that the two great points to be attained were—first, to discharge his piece without injury to himself, and secondly, to do so, without danger to the by-standers;—obviously, the best thing to do, after surmounting the difficulty of firing at all, was to shut his eyes firmly, and fire into the air.

On one occasion, after performing this feat, Mr. Tupman, on opening his eyes, beheld a plump partridge in the very act of falling wounded to the ground. He was just on the point of congratulating Wardle on his invariable success, when that gentleman advanced towards him, and grasped him warmly by the hand.

"Tupman," said the old gentleman, "you singled out that particular bird?"

"No," said Mr. Tupman—"no."

"You did," said Wardle. "I saw you do it—I observed you pick him out—I noticed you as you raised your piece to take aim;—and I will say this, that the best shot in existence could not have done it more beautifully. You are an older hand at this, than I thought you, Tupman;—you have been out before."

"It was in vain for Mr. Tupman to protest, with a smile of self-denial, that he never had. The very smile was taken as evidence to the contrary; and from that time forth his reputation was established. It is not the only reputation that has been acquired as easily, nor are such fortunate circumstances confined to partridge-shooting.

Mean while Mr. Winkle flashed and blazed and smoked away without producing any material results worthy of being noted down; sometimes expending his charge in mid-air, and at others sending it skimming along so near the surface of the ground, as to place the lives of the two dogs on a rather uncertain and precarious tenure. As a display of fancy shooting, it was extremely varied and curious; as an exhibition of firing with any precise object, it was, upon the whole, perhaps, a failure. It is an established axiom, that "every bullet has its billet." If it apply in an equal degree to shots, those of Mr. Winkle were unfortunate foundlings, deprived of their natural rights, cast loose upon the world, and billeted no where.

"Well," said Wardle, walking up to the side of the barrow, and wiping the streams of perspiration from his jolly red face; "smoking day, isn't it?"

"It is indeed," replied Mr. Pickwick. "The sun is tremendously hot, even to me. I don't know how you must feel it."

"Why," said the old gentleman, "pretty hot. It's past twelve, though. You see that green hill there?"

"Certainly."

"That's the place where we are to lunch; and there's the boy with the basket, punctual as clock-work."

"So he is," said Mr. Pickwick, brightening up. "Good boy, that. I'll give him a shilling presently. Now then, Sam, wheel away."

"Hold on, sir," said Mr. Weller, invigorated with the prospect of refreshments. "Out of the vay, young leathers. If you wally my precious life, don't upset me, as the gen'l'man said to the driver, when they was a carryin' him to Tyburn."

And quickening his pace to a sharp run, Mr. Weller wheeled his master nimbly to the green hill, shot him dexterously out by the very side of the basket, and proceeded to unpack it with the utmost despatch.

"Weal pie," said Mr. Weller, soliloquizing, as he arranged the eatables on the grass. "Werry good thing is a weal pie, when you know the lady as made it, and is quite sure it an't kittens; and arter all though, where's the odds, when they're so like weal that the werry piemen themselves n't know the difference?"

"Don't they, Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Not they, sir," replied Mr. Weller, touching his hat. I lodged in the same house vith a pieman once, sir, and a werry nice man he was—reg'lar clever chap, too—make pies out o' any thing, he could. 'What a number o' cats you keep, Mr. Brooks,' says I, when I got intimate with him. 'Ah,' says he, 'I do—a good many,' says he. 'You must be werry fond o' cats,' says I. 'Other people is, says he, a winkin' at me; 'they an't in season till the winter though,' says he. 'Not in season!' says I. 'No,' says he, 'fruits is in, cats is out.' 'Why, what do you mean?' says I. 'Mean?' says he. 'That I'll never be a party to the combination o' the butchers, to keep up the prices o' meat,' says he. 'Mr. Weller,' says he, squeezing my hand werry hard, and vispering in my ear—'don't mention this here agin, but it's the seasonin' as does it. They're all made o' them noble animals,' says he, a pointin' to a werry nice little tabby kitten, 'and I seasons 'em for beefsteak, weal, or kidney, 'cordin' to the demand; and, more than that,' says he, 'I can make a weal a beefsteak, or a beefsteak a kidney, or any one on 'em a mutton, at a minute's notice, just as the market changes, and appetites wary!'"

"He must have been a very ingenious young man, that, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, with a slight shudder.

"Just was, sir," replied Mr. Weller, continuing his occupation of emptying the basket, "and the pies was beautiful. Tongue; well, that's a werry good thing, when it a'n't a woman's. Bread—knuckle o' ham, reg'lar picter—cold beef in slices, werry good. What's in them stone jars, young touch-and-go?"

"Beer in this one," replied the boy, taking from his shoulder a couple of large stone bottles, fastened together by a leathern strap—"cold punch in t'other."

"And a werry good notion of a lunch it is, take it altogether," said Mr. Weller, surveying his arrangement of the repast with great satisfaction. "Now, gen'l'men, 'fall on,' as the English said to the French when they fixed bagginets."

It needed no second invitation to induce the party to yield full justice to the meal; and as little pressing did it require, to induce Mr. Weller, the long gamekeeper, and the two boys, to station themselves on the grass at a little distance, and do good execution upon a decent proportion of the viands. An old oak tree afforded a pleasant shelter to the group, and a rich prospect of arable and meadow land, intersected with luxuriant hedges, and richly ornamented with wood, lay spread out below them.

"This is delightful—thoroughly delightful!" said Mr. Pickwick, the skin of whose expressive countenance was rapidly pealing off with exposure to the sun.

"So it is—so it is, old fellow," replied Wardle. "Come; a glass of punch."

"With great pleasure," said Mr. Pickwick; and

the satisfaction of his countenance after drinking it, bore testimony to the sincerity of the reply.

"Good," said Mr. Pickwick, smacking his lips. "Very good. "I'll take another. Cool; very cool. Come, gentlemen," continued Mr. Pickwick, still retaining his hold upon the jar, "a toast. Our friends at Dingley Dell."

The toast was drunk with loud acclamations.

"I'll tell you what I shall do, to get up my shooting again," said Mr. Winkle, who was eating bread and ham with a pocket-knife. "I'll put a stuffed partridge on the top of a post, and practise at it, beginning at a short distance, and lengthening it by degrees. I understand it's capital practice."

"I know a gen'l'man, sir," said Mr. Weller, "as did that, and begun at two yards; but he never tried on it again; for he blowed the bird right clean away at the first fire, and nobody ever seed a feather on him afterwards."

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"Have the goodness to reserve your anecdotes, 'till they are called for."

"Cert'nly, sir."

Here Mr. Weller winked the eye which was not concealed by the beer-can he was raising to his lips, with such exquisite facetiousness, that the two boys went into spontaneous convulsions, and even the long man condescended to smile.

"Well, that certainly is most capital cold punch," said Mr. Pickwick, looking earnestly at the stone bottle;" and the day is extremely warm, and Tupman, my dear friend, a glass of punch?"

"With the greatest delight," replied Mr. Tupman; and having drank that glass, Mr. Pickwick took another, just to see whether there was any orange peel in the punch, because orange peel al-

ways disagreed with him; and finding that there was not, Mr. Pickwick took another glass to the health of their absent friend, and then felt himself imperatively called upon to propose another in honour of the punch-compounder, unknown.

This constant succession of glasses, produced considerable effect upon Mr. Pickwick; his countenance beamed with the most sunny smiles, laughter played around his lips, and good-humoured merriment twinkled in his eye. Yielding by degrees to the influence of the exciting liquid, rendered more so by the heat, Mr. Pickwick expressed a strong desire to recollect a song which he had heard in his infancy, and the attempt proving abortive, sought to stimulate his memory with more glasses of punch, which appeared to have quite a contrary effect; for, from forgetting the words of the song, he began to forget how to articulate any words at all; and finally, after rising to his legs to address the company in an eloquent speech, he fell into the barrow, and fast asleep, simultaneously.

The basket having been repacked, and it being found perfectly impossible to awaken Mr. Pickwick from his torpor, some discussion took place whether it would be better for Mr. Weller to wheel his master back again, or to leave him where he was, until they should all be ready to return. The latter course was at length decided on; and as their farther expedition was not to exceed an hour's duration, and as Mr. Weller begged very hard to be one of the party, it was determined to leave Mr. Pickwick asleep in the barrow, and to call for him on their return. So away they went, leaving Mr. Pickwick snoring most comfortably in the shade.

That Mr. Pickwick would have continued to snore in the shade until his friends came back, or, in default thereof, until the shades of evening had fallen on the landscape, there appears no reasonable cause to doubt; always supposing that he had been

suffered to remain there, in peace. But he was *not* suffered to remain there in peace. And this is what prevented him.

Captain Boldwig was a little fierce man in a stiff black neckerchief and blue surtout, who, when be did condescend to walk about his property, did it in company with a thick rattan stick, with a brass ferrule, and a gardener and sub-gardener with meek faces, to whom the (gardeners, not the stick) captain Boldwig gave his orders with all due grandeur and ferocity: for captain Boldwig's wife's sister had married a marquis, and the Captain's house was a villa, and his land "grounds," and it was all very high, and mighty, and great.

Mr. Pickwick had not been asleep half an hour, when little Captain Boldwig, followed by the two gardeners, came striding along as fast as his size and importance would let him; and when he came near the oak tree, Captain Boldwig paused, and drew a long breath, and looked at the prospect, as if he thought the prospect ought to be highly gratified at having him to take notice of it; and then he struck the ground emphatically with his stick, and summoned the head-gardener.

"Hunt," said Captain Boldwig.

"Yes, sir," said the gardener.

"Roll this place to-morrow morning—do you hear, Hunt?"

"Yes, sir."

"And take care that you keep me this place in good order—do you hear, Hunt?"

"Yes, sir."

"And remind me to have a board done about trespassers, and spring guns, and all that sort of thing, to keep the common people out. Do you hear, Hunt: do you hear?"

"I'll not forget it, sir."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the other man, advancing, with his hand to his hat.

"Well, Wilkins, what's the matter with *you?*" said Captain Boldwig.

"I beg your pardon, sir—but I think there have been trespassers here to-day."

"Ha!" said the Captain, scowling around him.

"Yes, sir—they have been dining here, I think, sir."

"Why, d— their audacity, so they have," said Captain Boldwig, as the crumbs and fragments that were strewn upon the grass, met his eye. "They have actually been devouring their food here. I wish I had the vagabonds here!" said the Captain, clenching the thick stick.

"I wish I had the vagabonds here," said the Captain, wrathfully.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Wilkins, "but—"

"But what? Eh?" roared the Captain; and following the timid glance of Wilkins, his eyes encountered the wheelbarrow and Mr. Pickwick.

"Who are you, you rascal?" said the Captain, administering several pokes to Mr. Pickwick's body with the thick stick. "What's your name?"

"Cold punch," murmured Mr. Pickwick, as he sunk to sleep again.

"What?" demanded Captain Boldwig.

No reply.

"What did he say his name was?" asked the Captain.

"Punch, I think, sir," replied Wilkins.

"That's his impudence—that's his confounded impudence," said Captain Boldwig. "He's only feigning to be asleep now," said the Captain, in a high passion. "He's drunk; he's a drunken plebeian. Wheel him away, Wilkins, wheel him away directly."

"Where shall I wheel him to, sir?" inquired Wilkins, with great timidity.

"Wheel him to the Devil," replied Captain Boldwig.

"Very well, sir," said Wilkins.

"Stay," said the Captain.

Wilkins stopped accordingly.

"Wheel him," said the Captain, "wheel him to the Pound; and let us see whether he calls himself Punch, when he comes to himself. He shall not bully me—he shall not bully me. Wheel him away."

Away Mr. Pickwick was wheeled in compliance with this imperious mandate; and the great Captain Boldwig, swelling with indignation, proceeded on his walk.

Inexpressible was the astonishment of the little party when they returned, to find that Mr. Pickwick had disappeared, and taken the wheelbarrow with him. It was the most mysterious and unaccountable thing that was ever heard of. For a lame man to have got upon his legs without any previous notice, and walked off, would have been most extraordinary; but when it came to his wheeling a heavy barrow before him, by way of amusement, it grew positively miraculous. They searched every nook and corner round, together and separately: they shouted, whistled, laughed, called—and all with the same result. Mr. Pickwick was not to be found; and after some hours of fruitless search, they arrived at the unwelcome conclusion, that they must go home without him.

Mean while Mr. Pickwick had been wheeled to the Pound, and safely deposited therein, fast asleep in the wheelbarrow, to the immeasurable delight and satisfaction, not only of all the boys in the village, but three-fourths of the whole population, who had gathered round in expectation of his waking. If their most intense gratification had been awakened by seeing him wheeled in, how many hundred-fold was their joy increased when, after a few indistinct cries of "Sam!" he sat up in the barrow and gazed with indescribable astonishment on the faces before him.

A general shout was of course the signal of his having woke up: and his involuntary inquiry of "What's the matter?" occasioned another, louder than the first, if possible.

"Here's a game," roared the populace.

"Where am I?" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick.

"In the Pound," replied the mob.

"How came I here? What was I doing! Where was I brought from?"

"Boldwig—Captain Boldwig," was the only reply.

"Let me out!" cried Mr. Pickwick. "Where's my servant? Where are my friends?"

"You an't got no friends. Hurrah!" And then there came a turnip, and then a potato, and then an egg, with a few other little tokens of the playful disposition of the many-headed.

How long this scene might have lasted, or how much Mr. Pickwick might have suffered, no one can tell, had not a carriage which was driving swiftly by, suddenly pulled up, from whence there descended old Wardle and Samuel Weller, the former of whom, in far less time than it takes to write it, if not to read it, had made his way to Mr. Pickwick's side, and placed him in the vehicle, just as the latter had concluded the third and last round of a single combat with the town-beadle.

"Run to the Justice's," cried a dozen voices.

"Ah, run avay," said Mr. Weller, jumping up on the box. "Give my compliments—Mr. Veller's compliments to the Justice, and tell him I've spoilt his beadle, and that if he'll svear in a new 'un I'll come back again to-morrow and spoil him. Drive on, old feller."

"I'll give directions for the commencement of an action for false imprisonment against this Captain Boldwig, directly I get to London," said Mr. Pickwick, as soon as the carriage turned out of the town.

"We were trespassing, it seems," said Wardle.

"I don't care," said Mr. Pickwick, "I'll bring the action."

"No, you won't," said Wardle.

"I will,—" but as there was a humorous expression in Wardle's face, Mr. Pickwick checked himself, and said—"Why not?"

"Because," said old Wardle, half-bursting with laughter, "because they might turn round on some of us, and say we had taken too much cold punch."

Do what he would, a smile would come into Mr. Pickwick's face: the smile extended into a laugh, the laugh into a roar, and the roar became general. So, to keep up their good humour, they stopped at the first road-side tavern they came to, and ordered a glass of brandy and water all round, with a magnum of extra strength, for Mr. Samuel Weller.

CHAPTER XX.

SHOWING HOW DODSON AND FOGG WERE MEN OF BUSINESS, AND THEIR CLERKS MEN OF PLEASURE: SHOWING ALSO WHAT CHOICE SPIRITS ASSEMBLED AT THE MAGPIE AND STUMP, AND WHAT A CAPITAL CHAPTER THE NEXT ONE WILL BE.

In the ground-floor front of a dingy house, at the very farthest end of Freeman's Court, Cornhill, sat the four clerks of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg, two of His Majesty's attorneys of the Courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas at Westminister, and solicitors of the High Court of Chancery; the aforesaid clerks catching about as favourable glimpses of Heaven's light and Heaven's sun, in the course of their daily labours, as a man might hope to do, were he placed at the bottom of a reasonably deep well; and without the opportunity of perceiving the stars in the day-time, which the latter secluded situation affords.

The clerk's office of Messrs. Dodson and Fogg was a dark, mouldy, earthy-smelling room, with a high wainscoted partition to screen the clerks from the vulgar gaze: a couple of old wooden chairs, a very loud-ticking clock, an almanack, and umbrella-stand, a row of hat pegs, and a few shelves, on which were deposited several ticketed bundles of dirty papers, some old deal boxes with paper labels, and sundry decayed stone ink bottles of various shapes and

sizes. There was a glass door leading into the passage which formed the entrance to the court, and on the outer side of this glass door, Mr. Pickwick, closely followed by Sam Weller, presented himself on the Friday morning succeeding the occurrence, of which a faithful narration is given in the last chapter.

"Come in, can't you," cried a voice from behind the partition, in reply to Mr. Pickwick's gentle tap at the door. And Mr. Pickwick and Sam entered accordingly.

"Mr. Dodson or Mr. Fogg at home, sir?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, gently, advancing, hat in hand, towards the partition.

"Mr. Dodson ain't at home, and Mr. Fogg's particularly engaged," replied the voice; and at the same time the head to which the voice belonged, with a pen behind its ear, looking over the partition, and at Mr. Pickwick.

It was a ragged head, the sandy hair of which, scrupulously parted on one side, and flattened down with pomatum, was twisted into little semicircular tails round a flat face ornamented with a pair of small eyes, and garnished with a very dirty shirt-collar, and a rusty black stock.

"Mr. Dodson ain't at home, and Mr. Fogg's particularly engaged," said the man to whom the head belonged.

"When will Mr. Dodson be back, sir?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Can't say."

"Will it be long before Mr. Fogg is disengaged, sir?"

"Don't know."

Here the man proceeded to mend his pen with great deliberation, while another clerk, who was mixing a Seidlitz powder, under cover of the lid of his desk, laughed approvingly.

"I think I'll wait," said Mr. Pickwick. There was no reply; so Mr. Pickwick sat down unbidden, and listened to the loud ticking of the clock and the murmured conversation of the clerks.

"That was a game, wasn't it?" said one of the gentlemen, in a brown coat and brass buttons, inky drabs, and bluchers, at the conclusion of some inaudible relation of his previous evening's adventures.

"Devilish good—devilish good," said the Seidlitz-powder man.

"Tom Cummins was in the chair," said the man with the brown coat; "it was half-past four when I got to Somers Town, and then I was so precious drunk, that I couldn't find the place where the latch-key went in, and was obliged to knock up the old 'ooman. I say, I wonder what old Fogg 'ud say, if he knew it. I should get the sack, I s'pose—eh?"

At this humorous notion, all the clerks laughed in concert.

"There was such a game with Fogg here, this mornin'," said the man in the brown coat, "while Jack was up stairs sorting the papers, and you two were gone to the stamp-office. Fogg was down here opening the letters, when that chap as we issued the writ against at Camberwell, you know, came in—what's his name again?"

"Ramsey," said the clerk who had spoken to Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, Ramsey—a precious seedy-looking customer. 'Well, sir,' says old Fogg, looking at him very fierce—you know his way—'well, sir, have you come to settle?" 'Yes, I have, sir,' said Ramsey, putting his hand in his pocket, and bringing out the money, 'the debt's two pound ten, and the costs three pound five, and here it is, sir;' and he sighed like bricks, as he lugged out the money, done up in

a bit of blotting-paper. Old Fogg looked first at the money, and then at him, and then he coughed in his rum way, so that I knew something was coming. 'You don't know there's a declaration filed, which increases thé costs materially, I suppose?' said Fogg. 'You don't say that, sir,' said Ramsey, starting back; 'the time was only out, last night, sir.' 'I do say it, though,' said Fogg, 'my clerk's just gone to file it. Hasn't Mr. Jackson gone to file that declaration in Bullman and Ramsey, Mr. Wicks?' Of course I said yes, and then Fogg coughed again, and looked at Ramsey. 'And here,' said Ramsey; 'have I nearly driven myself mad, scraping this money together, and all to no purpose.' 'None at all,' said Fogg, coolly; 'so you had better go back and scrape some more together, and bring it here in time. 'I can't get it, exclaimed Ramsey, striking the desk with his fist. 'Don't bully me, sir,' said Fogg, getting into a passion on purpose. 'I am not bullying you, sir,' said Ramsey. 'You are,' said Fogg; 'get out, sir; get out of this office, sir, and come back, sir,' when you know how to behave yourself.' Well, Ramsey tried to speak, but Fogg wouldn't let him, so he put the money in his pocket, and sneaked out. The door was scarcely shut, when old Fogg turned round to me, with a sweet smile on his face, and drew the declaration out of his coat pocket. 'Here, Wicks,' says Fogg, 'take a cab, and go down to the Temple as quick as you can, and file that. The costs are quite safe, for he's a steady man with a large family, at a salary of five-and-twenty shillings a week, and if he gives us a warrant of attorney, as he must in the end, I know his employers will see it paid; so we may as well get all we can out of him, Mr. Wicks; it's a Christian act to do it, Mr. Wicks, for with his large family and small income, he'll be all the better for a good lesson against getting into debt,—won't he, Mr. Wicks,

won't he?'—and, he smiled so good-naturedly as he went away, that it was delightful to see him. He is a capital man of business," said Wicks, in a tone of the deepest admiration, "capital, isn't he?"

The other three cordially subscribed to this opinion, and the anecdote afforded the most unlimited satisfaction.

"Nice men these here, sir," whispered Mr. Weller to his master; "werry nice notion of fun they has, sir."

Mr. Pickwick nodded assent, and coughed to attract the attention of the young gentleman behind the partition, who, having now relaxed their minds by a little conversation among themselves, condescended to take some notice of the stranger.

"I wonder whether Fogg's disengaged now?" said Jackson.

"I'll see," said Wicks, dismounting leisurely from his stool. "What name shall I tell Mr. Fogg?"

"Pickwick," replied the illustrious subject of these memoirs.

Mr. Jackson departed up stairs on his errand, and immediately returned with a message that Mr. Fogg would see Mr. Pickwick in five minutes; and having delivered it, returned again to his desk.

"What did he say his name was?" whispered Wicks.

"Pickwick," replied Jackson; "it's the defendant in Bardell and Pickwick."

A sudden scraping of feet, mingled with the sound of suppressed laughter, was heard from behind the partition.

"They're a twiggin' you, sir," whispered Mr. Weller.

"Twigging me, Sam!" replied Mr. Pickwick; "what do you mean by twigging me?"

Mr. Weller replied by pointing with his thumb over his shoulder; and Mr. Pickwick, on looking up, became sensible of the pleasing fact, that all the four clerks, with countenances expressive of the utmost amusement, and their heads thrust over the wooden screen, were minutely inspecting the figure and general appearance of the supposed trifler with female hearts, and disturber of female happiness. On his looking up the row of heads suddenly disappeared, and the sound of pens travelling at a furious rate over paper, immediately succeeded.

A sudden ring at the bell which hung in the office, summoned Mr. Jackson to the apartment of Fogg, from whence he came back to say that he (Fogg) was ready to see Mr. Pickwick if he would step up stairs.

Up stairs Mr. Pickwick did step, accordingly, leaving Sam Weller below. The room door of the one-pair back, bore inscribed in legible characters the imposing words "Mr. Fogg;" and, having tapped thereat, and been desired to come in, Jackson ushered Mr. Pickwick into the presence.

"Is Mr. Dodson in?" inquired Mr. Fogg.

"Just come in, sir," replied Jackson.

"Ask him to step here."

"Yes, sir." Exit Jackson.

"Take a seat, sir," said Fogg; "there is the paper, sir: my partner will be here directly, and we can converse about this matter, sir."

Mr. Pickwick took a seat and the paper, but, instead of reading the latter, peeped over the top of it, and took a survey of the man of business, who was an elderly pimply-faced, vegetable-diet sort of man, in a black coat, dark mixture trousers, and small black gaiters; a kind of being who seemed to be an essential part of the desk at which he was writing, and to have about as much thought or feeling,

After a few minutes' silence, Mr. Dodson, a plump, portly, stern-looking man, with a loud voice, appeared; and the conversation commenced.

"This is Mr. Pickwick," said Fogg.

"Ah! You are the defendant, sir, in Bardell and Pickwick?" said Dodson.

"I am, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Well, sir," said Dodson, "and what do you propose?"

"Ah!" said Fogg, thrusting his hands into his trousers' pockets, and throwing himself back in his chair, "what do you propose, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Hush, Fogg," said Dodson, "let me hear what Mr. Pickwick has to say."

"I came, gentlemen," replied Mr. Pickwick,—gazing placidly on the two partners,—"I came here, gentlemen, to express the surprise with which I received your letter the other day, and to inquire what grounds of action you can have against me."

"Grounds of"—Fogg had ejaculated thus much, when he was stopped by Dodson.

"Mr. Fogg," said Dodson, "I am going to speak."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Dodson," said Fogg.

"For the grounds of action, sir," continued Dodson, with moral elevation in his air, "you will consult your own conscience and your own feelings. We, sir, are guided entirely by the statement of our client. That statement, sir, may be true, or it may be false; it may be credible, or it may be incredible; but, if it be true. and if it be credible, I do not hesitate to say, sir, that our grounds of action, sir, are strong, and not to be shaken. You may be an unfortunate man, sir, or you may be a designing one; but if I were called upon as a jury-man upon my oath, sir, to express an opinion of your conduct, sir, I do not hesitate to assert that I

should have but one opinion about it." Here Dodson drew himself up, with an air of offended virtue, and looked at Fogg, who thrust his hands farther in his pockets, and, nodding his head sagely, said, in a tone of the fullest concurrence, "Most certainly."

"Well, sir, said Mr. Pickwick, with considerable pain depicted in his countenance, "you will permit me to assure you, that I am a most unfortunate man, so far as this case is concerned."

"I hope you are, sir," replied Dodson; "I trust you may be, sir. If you are really innocent of what is laid to your charge, you are more unfortunate than I had believed any man could possibly be. What do *you* say, Mr. Fogg?"

"I say precisely what you say," replied Fogg, with a smile of incredulity.

"The writ, sir, which commences the action," continued Dodson, "was issued regularly. Mr. Fogg, where is the *præcipe* book?"

"Here it is," said Fogg, handing over a square book, with a parchment cover.

"Here is the entry," resumed Dodson. "'Middlesex, Capias *Martha Bardell, widow*, v. *Samuel Pickwick.* Damages, £1500. Dodson and Fogg for the plaintiff, Sept. 28, 1830.' All regular, sir; perfectly." And Dodson coughed and looked at Fogg, who said "Perfectly," also. And then they both looked at Mr. Pickwick.

"I am to understand, then," said Mr. Pickwick, "that it really is your intention to proceed with this action?"

"Understand, sir!—that you certainly may," replied Dodson, with something as near a smile as his importance would allow.

"And that the damages are actually laid at fifteen hundred pounds?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"To which understanding you may add my as-

surance, that if we could have prevailed upon our client, they would have been laid at treble the amount, sir," replied Dodson.

"I believe Mrs. Bardell specially said, however," observed Fogg, glancing at Dodson, "that she would not compromise for a farthing less."

"Unquestionably," replied Dodson, sternly. For the action was only just begun; and it wouldn't have done to let Mr. Pickwick compromise it then, even if he had been so disposed.

"As you offer no terms, sir," said Dodson, displaying a slip of parchment in his right hand, and affectionately pressing a paper copy of it on Mr. Pickwick with his left, "I had better serve you with a copy of this writ, sir. Here is the original, sir."

"Very well, gentlemen, very well," said Mr. Pickwick, rising in person and wrath at the same time; "you shall hear from my solicitor, gentlemen."

"We shall be very happy to do so," said Fogg, rubbing his hands.

"Very," said Dodson, opening the door.

"And before I go, gentlemen," said the excited Mr. Pickwick, turning round on the landing, "permit me to say, that of all the disgraceful and rascally proceedings—"

"Stay, sir, stay," interposed Dodson, with great politeness. "Mr. Jackson—Mr. Wicks."

"Sir," said the two clerks, appearing at the bottom of the stairs.

"I just want you to hear what this gentleman says," replied Dodson. "Pray, go on, sir—disgraceful and rascally proceedings, I think you said."

"I did," said Mr. Pickwick, thoroughly roused. "I said, sir, that of all the disgraceful and rascally proceedings that ever were attempted, this is the most so. I repeat it, sir."

"You hear that, Mr. Wicks!" said Dodson.

"You won't forget these expressions, Mr. Jackson," said Fogg.

"Perhaps you would like to call us swindlers, sir," said Dodson. "Pray do, sir, if you feel disposed—now pray do, sir."

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick. "You *are* swindlers."

"Very good," said Dodson. "You can hear down there, I hope, Mr. Wicks.

"Oh yes, sir," said Wicks.

"You had better come up a step or two higher, if you can't," added Mr. Fogg.

"Go on, sir; do go on. You had better call us thieves, sir; or perhaps you would like to assault one of us. Pray do it, sir; if you would, we will not make the smallest resistance. Pray do it, sir."

As Fogg put himself very temptingly within the reach of Mr. Pickwick's clenched fist, there is little doubt that that gentleman would have complied with his earnest entreaty, but for the interposition of Sam, who, hearing the dispute, emerged from the office, mounted the stairs, and seized his master by the arm.

"You just come avay," said Mr. Weller. "Battledore and shuttlecock's a werry good game, vhen you an't the shuttlecock and two lawyers the battledores, in vich case it gets too excitin' to be pleasant. Come avay, sir. If you want to ease your mind by blowing up somebody, come out into the court and blow up me; but it's rather too expensive work to be carried on here."

And without the slightest ceremony, Mr. Weller hauled his master down the stairs, and down the court, and having safely deposited him in Cornhill, fell behind, prepared to follow whithersoever he should lead.

Mr. Pickwick walked on abstractedly, crossed opposite the Mansion House, and bent his steps up

Cheapside. Sam began to wonder where they were going, when his master turned round, and said—

"Sam, I will go immediately to Mr. Perker's."

"That's just exactly the werry place vere you ought to have gone last night," replied Mr. Weller.

"I think it is, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I *know* it is," said Mr. Weller.

"Well, well, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, "we will go there at once; but first, as I have been rather ruffled, I should like a glass of brandy and water, warm, Sam. Where can I have it, Sam?"

Mr. Weller's knowledge of London was extensive and peculiar. He replied without the slightest consideration—

"Second court on the right hand side—last house but vun on the same side the vay—take the box as stands in the first fire-place, 'cos there an't no leg in the middle o' the table, vhich all the others has, and it's werry inconwenient."

Mr. Pickwick observed his valet's directions implicitly, and bidding Sam follow him, entered the tavern he had pointed out, where the hot brandy and water was speedily placed before him; while Mr. Weller, seated at a respectful distance, though at the same table with his master, was accommodated with a pint of porter.

The room was one of a very homely description, and was apparently under the especial patronage of stage coachmen; for several gentlemen, who had all the appearange of belonging to that learned profession, were drinking and smoking in the different boxes. Among the number was one stout, red-faced, elderly man in particular, seated in an opposite box, who attracted Mr. Pickwick's attention. The stout man was smoking with great vehemence, but between every half-dozen puffs, he took his pipe from his mouth, and looked first at Mr. Weller and then at Mr. Pickwick. Then he would bury in a quart pot, as much of his countenance as the dimensions

of the quart-pot admitted of its receiving, and take another look at Sam and Mr. Pickwick. Then he would take another half-dozen puffs with an air of profound meditation, and look at them again. And at last the stout man, putting up his legs on the seat, and leaning his back against the wall, began to puff at his pipe without leaving off at all, and to stare through the smoke at the new-comers, as if he had made up his mind to see the most he could of them.

At first the evolutions of the stout man had escaped Mr. Weller's observation, but by degrees as he saw Mr. Pickwick's eyes every now and then turning towards him, he began to gaze in the same direction, at the same time shading his eyes with his hand, as if he partially recognised the object before him and wished to make quite sure of its identity. His doubts were speedily dispelled, however; for the stout man, having blown a thick cloud from his pipe, a hoarse voice, like some strange effort of ventriloquism, emerged from beneath the capacious shawls which muffled his throat and chest, and slowly uttered these sounds—"Vy, Sammy."

"Who's that, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Why, I wouldn't ha' believed it, sir," replied Mr. Weller, with astonished eyes. "It's the old 'un."

"Old one," said Mr. Pickwick. "What old one?"

"My father, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "How are you, my ancient?" And with this beautiful ebulition of filial affection, Mr. Weller, made room on the seat beside him, for the stout man, who advanced pipe in mouth and pot in hand, to greet him.

"Vy, Sammy," said the father, "I han't seen you, for two years and better."

"Nor more you have, old codger," replied the son. "How's mother-in-law?"

"Vy, I'll tell you what, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, senior, with much solemnity in his manner;

"There was never a nicer woman as a widder, than that 'ere second wentur o' mine—a sweet cretur she was, Sammy; and all I can say on her now, is, that as she was such an uncommon pleasant widder, it's a great pity she ever changed her condition. She don't act as a vife, Sammy."

"Don't she though?" inquired Mr. Weller, junior.

The elder Mr. Weller shook his head, as he replied with a sigh, "I've done it once too often, Sammy; I've done it once too often. Take example by your father, my boy, and be werry careful o' widders all your life, specially if they kept a public house, Sammy;" and having delivered this parental advice with great pathos, Mr. Weller senior re-filled his pipe from a tin-box he caried in his pocket: and, lighting his fresh pipe from the ashes of the old one, commenced smoking at a great rate.

"Beg your pardon, sir," he said, renewing the subject, and addressing Mr. Pickwick, after a considerable pause, "nothing personal, I hope, sir; I hope you han't got a widder, sir."

"Not I," replied Mr. Pickwick laughing; and while Mr. Pickwick laughed, Sam Weller informed his parent in a whisper, of the relation in which he stood towards that gentleman.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Weller, senior, taking off his hat, "I hope you've no fault to find with Sammy, sir."

"None whatever," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Werry glad to here it, sir," replied the old man; "I took a good deal o' pains with his eddication, sir; let him run in the streets when he was werry young, and shift for his-self. It's the only way to make a boy sharp, sir."

"Rather a dangerous process, I should imagine," said Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"And not a werry sure one, neither, added Mr. Weller: "I got reg'larly done the other day."

"No!" said the father.

"I did," said the son: and he proceeded to relate in as few words as possible, how he had fallen a ready dupe to the stratagems of Job Trotter.

"Mr. Weller, senior, listened to the tale with the most profound attention, and, at its termination, said—

"Worn't one o' these chaps slim and tall, with long hair, and the gift o' the gab werry gallopin'?"

Mr. Pickwick did not quite understand the last item of description, but, comprehending the first, said "Yes," at a venture.

"T'others a black-haired chap in mulberry livery, with a werry large head?"

"Yes, yes, he is," said Mr. Pickwick and Sam, with great earnestness.

"Then I know where they are, and that's all about it," said Mr. Weller; they're at Ipswich, safe enough, them two."

"No!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Fact," said Mr. Weller, "and I'll tell you how I know it. I work an Ipswich coach now and then for a friend o' mine. I worked down the werry day arter the night as you caught the rheumatiz, and at the Black Boy at Chelmsford—the werry place they'd come to—I took 'em up, right through to Ipswich, where the man servant—him in the mulberries—told me—they was a goin' to put up for a long time."

"I'll follow him," said Mr. Pickwick; "we may as well see Ipswich as any other place. I'll follow him."

"You're quite certain it was them, governor?" inquired Mr. Weller, junior.

"Quite, Sammy, quite," replied his father, "for their appearance is werry sing'ler; besides that 'ere, I wondered to see the gen'l'm'n so familiar with his servant; and, more than that, as they sat in front, right behind the box, I heard 'em laughing and saying how they done old Fireworks."

"Old who?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Old Fireworks, sir, by which, I've no doubt, they meant you, sir."

There is nothing positively vile or atrocious in the appellation of "old Fireworks," but still it is by no means a respectful or flattering designation. The recollection of all the wrongs he had sustained at Jingle's hands, had crowded on Mr. Pickwick's mind, the moment Mr. Weller began to speak; it wanted but a feather to turn the scale, and "old Fireworks" did it.

"I'll follow him," said Mr. Pickwick, with an emphatic blow on the table.

"I shall work down to Ipswich the day arter tomorrow, sir," said Mr. Weller, the elder, "from the Bull in Whitechapel; and if you really mean to go, you'd better go with me."

"So we had," said Mr. Pickwick; "very true; I can write to Bury, and tell them to meet me at Ipswich. We will go with you. But don't hurry away, Mr. Weller; won't you take any thing?"

"You're werry good, sir," replied Mr. Weller, stopping short—"perhaps a small glass of brandy to drink your health, and success to Sammy, sir, wouldn't be amiss."

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Pickwick. "A glass of brandy here."

The brandy was brought; and Mr. Weller, after pulling his hair to Mr. Pickwick, and nodding to Sam, jerked it down his capacious throat as if it had been a small thimble-full.

"Well done, father," said Sam, "take care, old fellow, or you'll have a touch of your old complaint, the gout."

"I've found a sov'rin' cure for that, Sammy," replied Mr. Weller, setting down the glass.

"A sovereign cure for the gout," said Mr. Pickwick, hastily producing his note-book, "what is it?"

"The gout, sir," replied Mr. Weller, "the gout

is a complaint as arises from too much ease and comfort. If ever you're attacked with the gout, sir, jist you marry a widder as has got a good loud woice, with a decent notion of usin' it, and you'll never have the gout agin. It's a capital prescription, sir. I takes it reg'lar, and I can warrant it to drive away any illness as is caused by too much jollity." Having imparted this valuable secret, Mr. Weller drained his glass once more, produced a laboured wink, sighed deeply, and slowly retired.

"Well, what do you think of what your father says, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick, with a smile.

"Think, sir!" replied Mr. Weller; "why, I think he's the wictim o' connubiality, as Blue Beard's domestic chaplain said, with a tear of pity, ven he buried him."

There was no replying to this very apposite conclusion, and, therefore, Mr. Pickwick, after settling the reckoning, resumed his walk to Gray's Inn. By the time he reached its secluded groves, however, eight o'clock had struck, and the unbroken stream of gentlemen in muddy high-lows, soiled white hats, and rusty apparel, who were pouring towards the different avenues of egress, warned him that the majority of the offices had closed for that day.

After climbing two pairs of steep and dirty stairs, he found his anticipations were realized. Mr. Perker's "outer door" was closed; and the dead silence which followed Mr. Weller's repeated kicks thereat, announced that the officials had retired from business for the night.

"This is pleasant, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick; "I shouldn't lose an hour in seeing him; I shall not be able to get one wink of sleep to-night, I know, unless I have the satisfaction of reflecting that I have confided this matter to a professional man."

"Here's an old 'ooman comin' up stairs, sir," replied Mr. Weller; "p'raps she knows where we

can find somebody. Hallo, old lady, vere's Mr. Perker's people?"

"Mr. Perker's people," said a thin, miserable-looking old woman, stopping to recover breath after the ascent of the staircase, "Mr. Perker's people's gone, and I'm a goin' to do the office out."

"Are you Mr. Perker's servant?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"I am Mr. Perker's laundress," replied the old woman.

"Ah," said Mr. Pickwick, half aside to Sam, "it's a curious circumstance, Sam, that they call the old women in these inns, laundresses. I wonder what's that for."

"'Cos they have a mortal awersion to washin' any thin', I suppose, sir," replied Mr. Weller.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Mr. Pickwick, looking at the old woman, whose appearance as well as the condition of the office, which she had by this time opened, indicated a rooted antipathy to the application of soap and water; "do you know where I can find Mr. Perker, my good woman?"

"No, I don't," replied the old woman, gruffly; "he's out o' town now."

"That's unfortunate," said Mr. Pickwick;—"where's his clerk—do you know?"

"Yes, I know where he is, but he wouldn't thank me for telling you," replied the laundress.

"I have very particular business with him," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Won't it do in the morning?" said the woman.

"Not so well," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Well," said the old woman, "if it was any thing very particular, I was to say where he was, so I suppose there's no harm in telling. If you just go to the Magpie and Stump, and ask at the bar for Mr. Lowten, they'll show you in to him, and he's Mr. Perker's clerk."

With this direction, and having been farthermore informed that the hostelry in question was situated in a court, happy in the double advantage of being in the vicinity of Clare Market, and closely approximating to the back of New Inn, Mr. Pickwick and Sam descended the ricketty staircase in safety, and issued forth in quest of the Magpie and Stump.

This favoured tavern, sacred to the evening orgies of Mr. Lowten and his companions, was what ordinary people would designate a public house. That the landlord was a man of a money-making turn, was sufficiently testified by the fact of a small bulk-head beneath the tap-room window, in size and shape not unlike a sedan-chair, being underlet to a mender of shoes: and that he was a being of a philanthropic mind, was evident from the protection afforded to a pie-man, who vended his delicacies without fear of interruption, on the very door-step. In the lower windows, which were decorated with curtains of a saffron hue, dangled two or three printed cards, bearing reference to Devonshire cider and Dantzic spruce, while a large black board, announcing in white letters to an enlightened public, that there were 500,000 barrels of double stout in the cellars of the establishment, left the mind in a state of not unpleasing doubt and uncertainty, as to the precise direction in the bowels of the earth, in which this mighty cavern might be supposed to extend. When we add, that the weather-beaten sign-board bore the half obliterated semblance of a magpie intently eyeing a crooked streak of brown paint, which the neighbours had been taught from infancy to consider as the "stump," we have said all that need be said of the exterior of the edifice.

On Mr. Pickwick's presenting himself at the bar, an elderly female emerged from behind a screen therein, and presented herself before him.

"Is Mr. Lowten here, ma'am?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes, he is, sir," replied the landlady. "Here, Charley, show the gentleman in to Mr Lowten."

"The gen'l'm'n can't go in, just now," said a shambling pot-boy, with a red head, "'cos Mr. Lowten's a singing a comic song, and he'll put him out. He'll be done d'rectly, sir."

The red-headed pot-boy had scarcely finished speaking, when a most unanimous hammering of tables, and jingling of glasses, announced that the song had that instant terminated; and Mr. Pickwick, after desiring Sam to solace himself in the tap, suffered himself to be conducted into the presence of Mr. Lowten.

At the announcement of "a gentleman to speak to you, sir," a puffy-faced young man who filled the chair at the head of the table, looked with some surprise in the direction from whence the voice proceeded; and the surprise seemed to be by no means diminished, when his eyes rested on an individual whom he had never seen before.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "and I am very sorry to disturb the other gentlemen, too, but I come on very particular business; and if you will suffer me to detain you at this end of the room for five minutes, I shall be very much obliged to you."

The puffy-faced young man rose, and drawing a chair close to Mr. Pickwick, in an obscure corner of the room, listened attentively to his tale of wo.

"Ah," he said, when Mr. Pickwick had concluded "Dodson and Fogg—sharp practice their's—capital men of business is Dodson and Fogg, sir,"

Mr. Pickwick admitted the sharp practice of Dodson and Fogg, and Lowten resumed.

"Perker ain't in town, and he won't be neither, before the end of next week; but if you want the action defended, and will leave the copy with me, I can do all that's needful 'till he comes back."

"That's exactly what I came here for," said Mr. Pickwick, handing over the document. "If any thing particular occurs, you can write to me at the post office, Ipswich."

"That's all right," replied Mr. Perker's clerk; and then seeing Mr. Pickwick's eye wandering curiously towards the table, he added, "Will you join us, for half an hour or so? We are capital company here, to-night, There's Samkin and Green's managing-clerk, and Smithers and Price's chancery, and Pimkin and Thomas's out o' door—sings a capital song, he does—and Jack Bamber, and ever so many more. You're come out of the country, I suppose. Would you like to join us?"

Mr. Pickwick could not resist so tempting an opportunity of studying human nature. He suffered himself to be led to the table, where, after having been introduced to the company in due form, he was accomodated with a seat near the chairman, and called for a glass of his favourite beverage.

A profound silence, quite contrary to Mr. Pickwick's expectation, succeeded.

"You don't find this sort of thing disagreeable, I hope, sir?" said his right-hand neighbour, a gentleman in a checked shirt and Mosaic studs, with a cigar in his mouth.

"Not in the least," replied Mr. Pickwick, "I like it very much, although I am no smoker myself."

"I should be very sorry to say I wasn't," interposed another gentleman on the opposite side of the table. "It's board and lodging to me, is smoke."

Mr. Pickwick glanced at the speaker, and thought that if it were washing too, it would be all the better.

Here there was another pause. Mr. Pickwick was a stranger, and his coming had evidently cast a damp upon the party.

"Mr. Grundy's going to oblige the company with a song," said the chairman.

"No he ain't," said Mr. Grundy.

"Why not?" said the chairman.

"Because I can't," said Mr. Grundy.

"You had better say you won't," replied the chairman.

"Well, then, I won't," retorted Mr. Grundy. Mr. Grundy's positive refusal to gratify the company, occasioned another silence.

"Won't any body enliven us?" said the chairman, despondingly.

"Why don't you enliven us yourself, Mr. Chairman?" said a young man with a whisker, a squint, and an open shirt collar (dirty) from the bottom of the table.

"Hear! hear!" said the smoking gentleman, in the Mosaic jewellery.

"Because I only know one song, and I have sung it already, and it's a fine of 'glasses round' to sing the same song twice in a night," replied the chairman.

This was an unanswerable reply, and silence prevailed again.

"I have been to night, gentlemen," said Mr. Pickwick, hoping to start a subject in which all the company could take part in discussing, "I have been to-night in a place which you all know very well, doubtless, but which I have not been in before, for some years, and know very little of; I mean Gray's Inn, gentlemen. Curious little nooks in a great place, like London, these old Inns are."

"Now," said the chairman, whispering across the table to Mr. Pickwick, "you have hit upon something that one of us at least, would talk upon for ever. You'll draw old Jack Bamber out; he was never heard to talk about any thing else but the Inns, and he has lived alone in them till he's half crazy."

The individual to whom Lowten alluded, was a little yellow high-shouldered man, whose countenance, from his habit of stooping forward when silent, Mr. Pickwick had not observed before. He wondered, though when the old man raised his shrivelled face, and bent his bright gray eye upon him, with a keen and inquiring look, that such remarkable features could have escaped his attention for a moment. There was a fixed grim smile perpetually on his countenance; he leant his chin on a long skinny hand, with nails of extraordinary length; and as he inclined his head to one side, and looked keenly out from beneath his ragged gray eye-brows, there was a strange, wild slyness in his leer, quite repulsive to behold.

This was the figure that now started forward, and burst into an animated torrent of words. As this chapter has been a long one, however, and as the old man was a remarkable personage, it will be more respectful to him, and more convenient to us, to let him speak for himself in a fresh one.

CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH THE OLD MAN LAUNCHES FORTH INTO HIS FAVOURITE THEME, AND RELATES A STORY ABOUT A QUEER CLIENT.

"AHA!" said the old man, a brief description of whose manner and appearance concluded the last chapter, "Aha! who was talking about the Inns?"

"I was, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick—"I was observing what singular old places they are."

"*You!*" said the old man contemptuously—"What do *you* know of the time when young men shut themselves up in those lonely rooms, and read and read, hour after hour, and night after night, till their reason wandered beneath their midnight studies; till their mental powers were exhausted; till morning's light brought no freshness or health to them; and they sank beneath the unnatural devotion of their youthful energies to their dry old books? Coming down to a later time, and a very different day, what do *you* know of the gradual sinking beneath consumption, or the quick wasting of fever—the grand results of 'life' and dissipation—which men have undergone in those same rooms? How many vain pleaders for mercy, do you think have turned away heart-sick, from the lawyer's office, to find a resting-place in the Thames, or a refuge in the jail? They are no ordinary houses, those.

There is not a panel in the old wainscoting, but what, if it were endowed with the powers of speech and memory, could start from the wall, and tell its tale of horror—the romance of life, sir, the romance of life. Common-place as they may seem now, I tell you they are strange old places, and I would rather hear many a legend with a terrific-sounding name, than the true history of one old set of chambers."

There was something so odd in the old man's sudden energy, and the subject which had called it forth, when Mr. Pickwick was prepared with no observation in reply; and the old man checking his impetuosity, and resuming the leer, which had disappeared during his previous excitement, said—

"Look at them in another light: their most common-place and least romantic: what fine places of slow torture they are. Think of the needy man who has spent his all, beggared himself, and pinched his friends, to enter the profession, which is destined never to yield a morsel of bread to him. The waiting—the hope—the disappointment—the fear—the misery—the poverty—the blight on his hopes, and end to his career—the suicide perhaps, or better still, the shabby, slip-shod drunkard. Am I not right about them, eh?" And the old man rubbed his hands, and leered as if in delight at having found another point of view in which to place his favourite subject.

Mr. Pickwick eyed the old man with great curiosity, and the remainder of the company smiled, and looked on in silence.

"Talk of your German universities," said the little old man—"Pooh, pooh! there's romance enough at home, without going half a mile for it; only people never think of it."

"I never thought of the romance of this particular subject before, certainly," said Mr. Pickwick, laughing.

"To be sure you didn't," said the little old man,

"of course not. As a friend of mine used to say to me, 'What is there in chambers, in particular?' 'Queer old places,' said I. 'Not at all,' said he. 'Lonely,' said I. 'Not a bit of it,' said he. He died one morning of apoplexy, as he was going to open his outer door. Fell with his head in his own letter-box, and there he lay for eighteen months. Every body thought he'd gone out of town."

"And how was he found at last?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"The benchers determined to break his door open, as he hadn't paid any rent for two years. So they did. Forced the lock; and a very dusty skeleton in a blue coat, black knee-shorts, and silks, fell forward in the arms of the porter who opened the door. Queer, that. Rather, perhaps; rather; eh?" And the little old man put his head more on one side, and rubbed his hands with unspeakable glee.

"I know another case," said the little old man, when his chuckles had in some degree subsided—"It occurred in Clifford's Inn. Tenant of a top set—bad character—shut himself up in his bed-room closet, and took a dose of arsenic. The steward thought he had run away: opened the door, and put a bill up. Another man came, took the chambers, furnished them, and went to live there. Somehow or other he couldn't sleep—always restless and uncomfortable. 'Odd,' says he. 'I'll make the other room my bed-chamber, and this my sitting-room.' He made the change and slept very well at night, but suddenly found that somehow he couldn't read in the evening: he got nervous and uncomfortable, and used to be always snuffing his candles and staring about him. 'I can't make this out,' said he, when he came home from the play one night, and was drinking a glass of cold grog, with his back to the wall, in order that he mightn't be able to fancy there was any one behind him—'I can't make it

out,' said he; and just then his eyes rested on the little closet that had been always locked up, and a shudder ran through his whole frame from top to toe. 'I have felt this strange feeling before,' said he—'I cannot help thinking there's something wrong about that closet.' He made a strong effort, plucked up his courage, shivered the lock with a blow or two of the poker, opened the door, and there, sure enough, standing bolt upright in the corner, was the last tenant, with a little bottle clasped firmly in his hand, and his face livid with the hue of a painful death." As the little old man concluded, he looked round on the attentive faces of his wondering auditory with a smile of grim delight.

"What strange things these are you tell us of, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, minutely scanning the old man's countenance, by the aid of his glasses.

"Strange?" said the little old man—"Nonsense; you think them strange, because you know nothing about it. They are funny, but not uncommon."

"Funny!" exclaimed Mr. Pickwick, involuntarily.

"Yes, funny, are they not?" replied the little old man with a diabolical leer; and then, without pausing for an answer, he continued—

"I knew another man—let me see—it's forty years ago now—who took an old damp rotten set of chambers, in one of the most ancient Inns, that had been shut up and empty for years and years before. There were lots of old women's stories about the place, and it certainly was very far from being a cheerful one; but he was poor, and the rooms were cheap, and that would have been quite a sufficient reason for him, if they had been ten times worse than they really were. He was obliged to take some mouldering fixtures that were on the place, and, among the rest, was a great lumbering wooden press for papers with large glass doors, and a green curtain inside; a pretty useless thing for him, for he had no papers to put in it; and as to his

clothes he carried them about with him, and that wasn't very hard work, either. Well, he had moved in all his furniture—it wasn't quite a trunk-full—and sprinkled it about the room, so as to make the four chairs look as much like a dozen as possible, and was sitting down before the fire at night drinking the first glass of two gallons of whisky he had ordered on credit, wondering whether it would ever be paid for, and if so, in how many years' time, when his eyes encountered the glass doors of the wooden press. 'Ah!' says he,—if I hadn't been obliged to take that ugly article at the old broker's valuation, I might have got something comfortable for the money. I'll tell you what it is, old fellow,' he said, speaking aloud to the press, just because he had got nothing else to speak to—'If it wouldn't cost more to break up your old carcass, than it would ever be worth afterwards, I'd have a fire out of you, in less than no time.' He had hardly spoken the words, when a sound resembling a faint groan, appeared to issue from the interior of the case. It startled him at first, but thinking, on a moment's reflection, that it must be some young fellow in the next chambers, who had been dining out, he put his feet on the fender, and raised the poker to stir the fire. At that moment the sound was repeated: and one of the glass doors slowly opening, disclosed a pale and emaciated figure in soiled and worn apparel, standing erect in the press. The figure was tall and thin, and the countenance expressive of care and anxiety; but there was something in the hue of the skin, and gaunt and unearthly appearance of the whole form, which no being of this world was ever seen to wear. 'Who are you?' said the new tenant, turning very pale, poising the poker in his hand, however, and taking a very decent aim at the countenance of the figure—'Who are you?' 'Don't throw that poker at me,' replied the form—'If you hurled it with ever so sure an aim, it would pass through me, with-

out resistance, and expend its force on the wood behind. I am a spirit.' 'And pray what do you want here?' faltered the tenant. 'In this room,' replied the apparition, 'my worldly ruin was worked, and I and my children beggared. In this press, the papers in a long, long suit, which accumulated for years, were deposited. In this room, when I had died of grief, and long-deferred hope, two wily harpies divided the wealth for which I had contested during a wretched existence, and of which at last, not one farthing was left for my unhappy descendants. I terrified them from the spot, and since that day have prowled by night—the only period at which I can re-visit the earth—about the scenes of my long-protracted misery. This apartment is mine: leave it to me.' 'If you insist upon making your appearance here,' said the tenant, who had had time to collect his presence of mind during this prosy statement of the ghost's—'I shall give up possession with the greatest pleasure; but I should like to ask you one question, if you will allow me.' 'Say on,' said the apparition, sternly. 'Well,' said the tenant, 'I don't apply the observation personally to you, because it is equally applicable to all the ghosts I ever heard of; but it does appear to me, somewhat inconsistent, that when you have an opportunity of visiting the fairest spots of earth—for I suppose space is nothing to you—you should always return exactly to the very places where you have been most miserable.' 'That's very true; I never thought of that before,' said the ghost. 'You see, sir,' pursued the tenant, 'this is a very uncomfortable room. From the appearance of that press, I should be disposed to say that it is not wholly free from bugs; and I really think you might find much more comfortable quarters: to say nothing of the climate of London, which is extremely disagreeable.' 'You are very right, sir,' said the ghost, politely; 'it never struck me till now; I'll try change of air directly'—and, in fact,

he began to vanish as he spoke: his legs, indeed, had quite disappeared. 'And if, sir,' said the tenant calling after him, 'if you *would* have the goodness to suggest to the other ladies and gentlemen who are now engaged in haunting old empty houses, that they might be much more comfortable elsewhere, you will confer a very great benefit on society.' 'I will,' replied the ghost; 'we must be dull fellows—very dull fellows, indeed; I can't imagine how we can have been so stupid.' With these words, the spirit disappeared; and what is rather remarkable," added the old man with a shrewd look round the table, "he never came back again."

"That ain't bad, if it's true," said the man in the Mosaic studs, lighting a fresh cigar.

"*If!*" exclaimed the old man, with a look of excessive contempt. "I suppose," he added, turning to Lowten, "he'll say next, that my story about the queer client we had, when I was in an attorney's office, is not true, either—I shouldn't wonder."

"I shan't venture to say any thing at all about it, seeing that I never heard the story," observed the owner of the Mosaic decorations.

"I wish you would repeat it, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah, do," said Lowten: "nobody has heard it but me, and I have nearly forgotten it."

The old man looked round the table, and leered more horribly than ever, as if in triumph, at the attention which was depicted in every face. Then rubbing his chin with his hand, and looking up to the ceiling as if to recall the circumstances to his memory, he began as follows:—

THE OLD MAN'S TALE ABOUT THE QUEER CLIENT.

"It matters little," said the old man, "where, or how, I picked up this brief history. If I were to relate it in the order in which it reached me, I

should commence in the middle, and when I had arrived at the conclusion, go back for a beginning. It is enough for me to say that some of its circumstances passed before my own eyes; for the remainder I know them to have happened, and there are some persons yet living, who will remember them but too well.

"In the borough High Street, near Saint George's Church, and on the same side of the way, stands, as most people know, the smallest of our debtor's prisons—the Marshalsea. Although in later times it has been a very different place from the sink of filth and dirt it once was, even its improved condition holds out but little temptation to the extravagant, or consolation to the improvident. The condemned felon has as good a yard for air and exercise in Newgate, as the insolvent debtor in the Marshalsea Prison.

"It may be my fancy or it may be that I cannot separate the place from the old recollections associated with it, but this part of London I cannot bear. The street is broad, the shops are spacious, the noise of passing vehicles, the footsteps of a perpetual stream of people—all the busy sounds of traffic, resound in it from morn till midnight, but the streets around, are mean and close; poverty and debauchery lie festering in the crowded alleys, want and misfortune are pent up in the narrow prison; an air of gloom and dreariness seems in my eyes at least, to hang about the scene, and to impart to it, a squalid and sickly hue.

"Many eyes, that have long since been closed in the grave, have looked round upon that scene lightly enough, when entering the gate of the old Marshalsea Prison for the first time: for despair seldom comes with the first severe shock of misfortune. A man has confidence in untried friends,

he remembers the many offers of service so freely made by his boon companions when he wanted them not; he has hope—the hope of happy inexperience—and however he may bend beneath the first shock, it springs up in his bosom, and flourishes there for a brief space, until it droops beneath the blight of disappointment and neglect. How soon have those same eyes, deeply sunken in the head, glared from faces wasted with famine, and sallow from confinement, in days when it was no figure of speech to say that debtors rotted in prison, with no hope of release, and no prospect of liberty! The atrocity in its full extent no longer exists, but there is enough of it left, to give rise to occurrences that make the heart bleed.

"Twenty years ago, that pavement was worn with the footsteps of a mother and child, who, day by day, so surely as the morning came, presented themselves at the prison gate; often after a night of restless misery and anxious thoughts, were they there, a full hour too soon, and then the young mother turning meekly away, would lead the child to the old bridge, and raising him in her arms to show him the glistening water, tinted with the light of the morning's sun, and stirring with all the bustling preparations for business and pleasure that the river presents at that early hour, endeavour to interest his thoughts in the objects before him. But she would quickly set him down, and hiding her face in her shawl, give vent to the tears that blinded her, for no expression of interest or amusement lighted up his thin and sickly face. His recollections were few enough, but they were all of one kind—all connected with the poverty and misery of his parents. Hour after hour, had he sat on his mother's knee, and with childish sympathy watched the tears that stole down her face, and then crept quietly away

into some dark corner, and sobbed himself to sleep. The hard realities of the world, with many of its worst privations—hunger and thirst, and cold and want—had all come home to him, from the first dawnings of reason; and though the form of childhood was there, its light heart, its merry laugh, and sparkling eyes were wanting.

"The father and mother looked on upon this, and upon each other, with thoughts of agony they dared not breathe in words. The healthy, strong-made man, who could have borne almost any fatigue of active exertion, was wasting beneath the close confinement and unhealthy atmosphere of a crowded prison. The slight and delicate woman was sinking beneath the combined effects of bodily and mental illness; the child's young heart was breaking.

"Winter came, and with it weeks of cold and heavy rain. The poor girl had removed to a wretched apartment close to the spot of her husband's imprisonment; and though the change had been rendered necessary by their increasing poverty, she was happier now, for she was nearer him. For two months, she and her little companion watched the opening of the gate as usual. One day she failed to come, for the first time. Another morning arrived, and she came alone. The child was dead.

"They little know, who coldly talk of the poor man's bereavements, as a happy release from pain to the departed, and a merciful relief from expense to the survivor—they little know, I say, what the agony of those bereavements is. A silent look of affection and regard when all other eyes are turned coldly away—the consciousness that we possess the sympathy and affection of one being when all others have deserted us—is a hold, a stay, a comfort in the deepest affliction, which no wealth

could purchase, or power bestow. The child had sat at its parents' feet for hours together, with his little hands patiently folded in each other, and his thin wan face raised towards them. They had seen him pine away, from day to day; and though his brief existence had been a joyless one, and he was now removed to that peace and rest which, child as he was, he had never known in this world, they were his parents, and his loss sunk deep into their souls.

"It was plain to those who looked upon the mother's altered face that death must soon close the scene of her adversity and trial. Her husband's fellow prisoners shrunk from obtruding on his grief and misery, and left to himself alone, the small room he had previously occupied in common with two companions. She shared it with him: and lingering on without pain, but without hope, her life ebbed slowly away.

"She had fainted one evening in her husband's arms, and he had borne her to the open window, to revive her with the air, when the light of the moon falling full upon her face, showed him a change upon her features, which made him stagger beneath her weight, like a helpless infant.

"'Set me down, George,' she said faintly. He did so, and seating himself beside her, covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears.

"'It is very hard to leave you, George,' she said, 'but it's God's will, and you must bear it for my sake. Oh! how I thank him for having taken our boy. He is happy, and in heaven now. What would he have done here, without his mother!'

"'You shall not die, Mary, you shall not die;' said the husband, starting up. He paced hurriedly to and fro, striking his head with his clenched fists; then reseating himself beside her, and supporting her in his arms, added more calmly, 'Rouse your-

self, my dear girl—pray, pray do. You will revive yet.'

"'Never again, George; never again'—said the dying woman. 'Let them lay me by my poor boy now, but promise me, that if ever you leave this dreadful place, and should grow rich, you will have us removed to some quiet country churchyard, a long, long way off—very far from here, where we can rest in peace. Dear George, promise me you will.'

"'I do, I do,—said the man, throwing himself passionately on his knees before her. "Speak to me, Mary, another word; one look—but one—'

"He ceased to speak: for the arm that clasped his neck, grew stiff and heavy. A deep sigh escaped from the wasted form before him; the lips moved, and a smile played upon the face, but the lips were pallid, and the smile faded into a rigid and ghastly stare. He was alone in the world.

"That night, in the silence and desolation of his miserable room, the wretched man knelt down by the dead body of his wife, and called on God to witness a dreadful oath, that from that hour, he devoted himself to revenge her death and that of his child; that from thenceforth to the last moment of his life, his whole energies should be directed to this one object; that his revenge should be protracted and terrible; that his hatred should be undying and unextinguishable; and should hunt its object through the world.

"The deepest despair, and passion scarcely human, had made such fierce ravages on his face and form, in that one night, that his companions in misfortune shrunk affrighted from him as he passed by. His eyes were bloodshot and heavy, his face a deadly white, and his body bent as if with age. He had bitten his under lip nearly through in the violence of his mental suffering, and the blood which had flowed from the wound had trickled down his chin,

and stained his shirt and neckerchief. No tear, or sound of complaint escaped him; but the unsettled look, and disordered haste with which he paced up and down the yard, denoted the fever which was burning within.

"It was necessary that his wife's body should be removed from the prison, without delay. He received the communication with perfect calmness, and acquiesced in its propriety. Nearly all the inmates of the prison had assembled to witness its removal; they fell back on either side when the widower appeared; he walked hurriedly forward, and stationed himself, alone, in a little railed area close to the lodge gate, from whence the crowd, with an instinctive feeling of delicacy, had retired. The rude coffin was borne slowly forward on men's shoulders. A dead silence pervaded the throng, broken only by the audible lamentations of the women, and the shuffling steps of the bearers on the stone pavement. They reached the spot where the bereaved husband stood; and stopped. He laid his hand upon the coffin, and mechanically adjusting the pall with which it was covered, motioned them onwards. The turnkeys in the prison lobby took off their hats as it passed through, and in another moment the heavy gate closed behind it. He looked vacantly upon the crowd, and fell heavily to the ground.

"Although for many weeks after this, he was watched night and day, in the wildest ravings of fever, neither the consciousness of his loss, nor the recollection of the vow he had made, ever left him for a moment. Scenes changed before his eyes, place succeeded place, and event followed event, in all the hurry of delirium; but they were all connected in some way with the great object of his mind. He was sailing over a boundless expanse of sea, with a blood-red sky above, and the angry waters lashed into fury beneath, boiling and eddying up, on every side. There was another vessel be-

fore them, toiling and labouring in the howling storm; her canvass fluttering in ribands from the mast, and her deck thronged with figures who were lashed to the sides, over which huge waves every instant burst, sweeping away some devoted creatures into the foaming sea. Onward they bore, amidst the roaring mass of water, with a speed and force which nothing could resist; and striking the stern of the foremost vessel, crushed her, beneath their keel. From the huge whirlpool which the sinking wreck occasioned, arose a shriek so loud and shrill—the death-cry of a hundred drowning wretches, blended into one fierce yell—that it rung far above the war-cry of the elements, and echoed, and re-echoed till it seemed to pierce air, sky, and ocean. But what was that—that old gray-head that rose above the water's surface, and with looks of agony, and screams for aid, buffeted with the waves! One look, and he had sprung from the vessel's side, and with vigorous strokes was swimming towards it. He reached it; he was close upon it. They were *his* features. The old man saw him coming, and vainly strove to elude his grasp. But he clasped him tight, and dragged him beneath the water. Down, down with him, fifty fathoms deep: his struggles grew fainter and fainter, until they wholly ceased. He was dead; he had killed him, and had kept his oath.

"He was traversing the scorching sands of a mighty desert, bare-footed and alone. The sand choked and blinded him; its fine thin grains entered the very pores of his skin, and irritated him almost to madness. Gigantic masses of the same material, carried forward by the wind, and shone through, by the burning sun, stalked in the distance like pillars of living fire. The bones of men, who had perished in the dreary waste, lay scattered at his feet; a fearful light fell on every thing around; and so far as the eye could reach, nothing but ob-

jects of dread and horror presented themselves. Vainly striving to utter a cry of terror, with his tongue cleaving to his mouth, he rushed madly forward. Armed with supernatural strength, he waded through the sand, until exhausted with fatigue and thirst, he fell senseless on the earth. What fragrant coolness revived him; what gushing sound was that? Water! It was indeed a well; and the clear fresh stream was running at his feet. He drank deeply of it, and throwing his aching limbs upon the bank, sunk into a delicious trance. The sound of approaching footsteps roused him. An old gray headed man tottered forward to slake his burning thirst. It was *he* again. He wound his arms round the old man's body, and held him back. He struggled in powerful convulsions, and shrieked for water—for but one drop of water to save his life. But he held the old man firmly, and watched his agonies with greedy eyes; and when his lifeless head fell forward on his bosom, he rolled the corpse from him with his feet.

"When the fever left him, and consciousness returned, he awoke to find himself rich and free: to hear that the parent who would have let him die in jail—*would!* who *had* let those who were far dearer to him than his own existence, die of want and the sickness of heart that medicine cannot cure—had been found, dead in his bed of down. He had all the heart to leave his son a beggar, but proud even of his health and strength, he had put off the act till it was too late, and now might gnash his teeth in the other world, at the thought of the wealth his remissness had left him. He woke to this, and he woke to more. To recollect the purpose for which he lived, and to remember that his enemy was his wife's own father—the man who had cast him into prison, and who, when his daughter and her child sued at his feet for mercy, had spurned them from his door. Oh, how he cursed the weakness that

prevented him from being up, and active, in his scheme of vengeance!

"He caused himself to be carried from the scene of his loss and misery, and conveyed to a quiet residence on the sea coast—not in the hope of recovering his peace of mind or happiness, for both were fled for ever; but to restore his prostate energies, and meditate on his darling object. And here, some evil spirit cast in his way, the opportunity for his first, most horrible revenge.

"It was summer time; and wrapped in his gloomy thoughts, he would issue from his solitary lodgings early in the evening, and wandering along a narrow path beneath the cliffs to a wild and lonely spot that had struck his fancy in his ramblings, seat himself on some fallen fragments of the rock, and burying his face in his hands, remain there for hours—sometimes until night had completely closed in, and the long shadows of the frowning cliffs above his head, cast a thick black darkness on every object near him.

"He was seated here, one calm evening in his old position, now and then raising his head, to watch the flight of a seagull, or carry his eye along the glorious crimson path, which commencing in the middle of the ocean, seemed to lead to its very verge where the sun was setting, when the profound stillness of the spot was broken by a loud cry for help; he listened, doubtful of his having heard aright, when the cry was repeated with even greater vehemence than before, and, starting to his feet, he hastended in the direction from whence it proceeded.

"The tale told itself at once: some scattered garments lay on the beach; a human head was just visible above the waves at a little distance from the shore; and an old man wringing his hands in agony, was running to and fro, shrieking for assistance. The invalid, whose strength was now sufficiently restored, threw off his coat, and rushed towards the

sea, with the intention of plunging in, and dragging the drowning man ashore.

"'Hasten here, sir, in God's name; help, help, sir, for the love of Heaven. He is my son, sir, my only son,' said the old man, frantically, as he advanced to meet him. 'My only son, sir, and he is dying before his father's eyes.'

"At the first word the old man uttered, the stranger checked himself in his career, and, folding his arms, stood perfectly motionless.

"'Great God!' exclaimed the old man, recoiling —'Heyling!'

"The stranger smiled, and was silent.

"'Heyling!' said the old man wildly—'My boy, Heyling, my dear boy, look, look;' and, gasping for breath, the miserable father pointed to the spot where the young man was struggling for life.

"'Hark!' said the old man—'He cries once more. He is alive yet. Heyling, save him, save him.'

"The stranger smiled again, and remained immoveable as a statue.

"'I have wronged you,' shrieked the old man, falling on his knees, and clasping his hands together —'Be revenged; take my all, my life; cast me into the water at your feet, and, if human nature can repress a struggle, I will die, without stirring hand or foot. Do it, Heyling, do it, but save my boy, he is so young, Heyling, so young to die.'

"'Listen,' said the stranger, grasping the old man fiercely by the wrist—'I will have life for life, and here is ONE. *My* child died before his father's eyes, a far more agonizing and painful death than that young slanderer of his sister's worth is meeting while I speak. You laughed—laughed in your daughter's face, where death had already set his hand—at our sufferings, then. What think you of them now? See there, see there.'

"As the stranger spoke, he pointed to the sea. A faint cry died away upon its surface: the last

powerful struggle of the dying man agitated the rippling waves for a few seconds: and the spot where he had gone down into his early grave, was undistinguishable from the surrounding water.

* * * *

"Three years had elapsed when a gentleman alighted from a private carriage at the door of a London attorney, then well known to the public, as a man of no great nicety in his professional dealings, and requested a private interview on business of importance. Although evidently not past the prime of life, his face was pale, haggard, and dejected; and it did not require the accute perception of the man of business, to discern at a glance, that disease or suffering had done more to work a change in his appearance, than the mere hand of time could have accomplished in twice the period of his whole life.

"'I wish you to undertake some legal business for me,' said the stranger.

"The attorney bowed obsequiously, and glanced at a large packet, which the gentleman carried in his hand. His visiter observed the look, and proceeded.

"'It is no common business,' said he; 'nor have these papers reached my hands without long trouble and great expense.'

"The attorney cast a still more anxious look at the packet: and his visiter, untying the string that bound it, disclosed a quantity of promissory notes, with some copies of deeds, and other documents.

"'Upon these papers,' said the client, 'the man whose name they bear, has raised, as you will see, large sums of money, for some years past. There was a tacit understanding between him and the men into whose hands they originally went—and from whom I have by degrees purchased the whole, for treble and quadruple their nominal value—that

these loans should be from time to time renewed, until a given period had elapsed. Such an understanding is nowhere expressed. He has sustained many losses of late; and these obligations accumulating upon him at once, would crush him to the earth."

"The whole amount is some thousands of pounds," said the attorney, looking over the papers.

"It is," said the client.

"What are we to do?" inquired the man of business.

"Do!" replied the client, with sudden vehemence—"Put every engine of the law in force, every trick that ingenuity can devise, and rascality execute; fair means and foul; the open oppression of the law, aided by all the craft of its most ingenions practitioners. I would have him die a harassing and lingering death. Ruin him, seize and sell his lands and goods, drive him from house and home, and drag him forth a beggar in his old age, to die in a common gaol."

"'But the costs, my dear sir, the costs of all this,' reasoned the attorney, when he had recovered from his momentary surprise,—'If the defendant be a man of straw, who is to pay the costs, sir?'

"'Name any sum,' said the stranger, his hand trembling so violently with excitement, that he could scarcely hold the pen he seized as he spoke, 'Any sum, and it is yours. Don't be afraid to name it, man. I shall not think it dear, if you gain my object.'

"The attorney named a large sum, at hazard, as the advance he should require to secure himself against the possibility of loss: but more with the view of ascertaining how far his client was really disposed to go, than with any idea that he would comply with the demand. The stranger wrote a cheque upon his banker, for the whole amount, and left him.

"The draft was duly honoured, and the attorney, finding that his strange client might be safely relied upon, commenced his work in earnest. For more than two years afterwards, Mr. Heyling would sit whole days together, in the office, poring over the papers as they accumulated, and reading again and again, his eyes gleaming with joy, the letters of remonstrance, the prayers for a little delay, the representations of the certain ruin in which the opposite party must be involved, which poured in, as suit after suit, and process after process, were commenced. To all applications for a brief indulgence, there was but one reply—the money must be paid! Land, house, furniture, each in its turn, was taken under some one of the numerous executions which were issued; and the old man himself would have been immured in prison, had he not escaped the vigilance of the officers, and fled.

"The implacable animosity of Heyling, so far from being satiated by the success of his persecution, increased a hundred fold with the ruin he inflicted. On being informed of the old man's flight, his fury was unbounded. He gnashed his teeth with rage, tore the hair from his head, and assailed, with horrid imprecations, the men who had been intrusted with the writ. He was only restored to comparative calmness by repeated assurances of the certainty of discovering the fugitive. Agents were sent in quest of him in all directions; every stratagem that could be invented was resorted to, for the purpose of discovering his place of retreat; but it was all in vain. Half a year had passed over, and he was still undiscovered.

"At length, late one night, Heyling, of whom nothing had been seen for many weeks before, appeared at his attorney's private residence, and sent up word that a gentleman wished to see him instantly. Before the attorney, who had recognised his voice from above stairs, could order the servant to

admit him, he had rushed up the staircase, and entered the drawing-room pale, and breathless.—Having closed the door, to prevent being overheard, he sunk into a chair, and said, in a low voice—

"'Hush! I have found him at last.'

"'No!' said the attorney—'Well done, my dear sir; well done.'

"'He lies concealed in a wretched lodging in Camden Town.' said Heyling—'Perhaps it is as well we did lose sight of him, for he has been living alone there in the most abject misery all the time, and he is poor—very poor.'

"'Very good,' said the attorney—'You will have the caption made to-morrow, of course?'

"'Yes,' replied Heyling. 'Stay! No! The next day. You are surprised at my wishing to postpone it,' he added, with a ghastly smile; 'but I had forgotten. The next day is an anniversary in his life: let it be done then.'

"'Very good,' said the attorney—'Will you write down instructions for the officer?'

"'No; let him meet me here, at eight in the evening, and I will accompany him myself.'

"They met on the appointed night, and hiring a hackney-coach, directed the driver to stop at that corner of that old Pancras road, at which stands the parish work-house. By the time they alighted there, it was quite dark; and, proceeding by the dead wall in front of the Veterinary Hospital, they entered a small by-street, which is, or was, at that time, called Little College Street, and which, whatever it may be now, was, in those days, a desolate place enough, surrounded by little else than fields and ditches.

"Having drawn the travelling cap he had on, half over his face, and muffled himself in his cloak, Heyling stopped before the meanest looking house in the street, and knocked gently at the door. It

was at once opened by a woman, who dropped a courtesy of recognition, and Heyling, whispering the officer to remain below, crept gently up stairs, and opening the door of the front room, entered at once.

"The object of his search, and his unrelenting animosity, now a decrepit old man, was seated at a bare deal table, on which stood a miserable candle. He started on the entrance of the stranger, and rose feebly to his feet.

"'What now, what now?' said the old man—'What fresh misery is this? What do you want here?'

"'A word with *you*,' replied Heyling. As he spoke, he seated himself at the other end of the table, and, throwing off his cloak and cap, disclosed his features.

"The old man seemed instantly deprived of the power of speech. He fell backward in his chair, and, clasping his hands together, gazed on the apparition with a mingled look of abhorrence and fear.

"'This day six years' said Heyling, "I claimed the life you owed me for my child's. Besides the lifeless form of your daughter, old man, I swore to live a life of revenge. I have never swerved from my purpose for a moment's space; but if I had, one thought of her uncomplaining, suffering look, as she drooped away, or of the starving face of our innocent child, would have nerved me to my task. My first act of requital you well remember: this is my last.'

"The old man shivered, and his hands dropped powerless by his side.

"'I leave England to-morrow,' said Heyling, after a moment's pause.—'To-night I consign you to the living death, to which you devoted her—a hopeless prison——'

"He raised his eyes to the old man's counte-

nance, and paused. He lifted the light to his face, set it gently down, and left the apartment.

"'You had better see to the old man,' he said to the woman, as he openned the door, and motioned the officer to follow him into the street—'I think he is ill.' The woman closed the door, ran hastily up stairs, and found him lifeless. He had died in a fit.

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"Beneath a plain grave-stone, in one of the most peaceful and secluded church-yards in Kent, where wild flowers mingled with the grass, and the soft landscape around forms the fairest spot in the garden of England, lie the bones of the young mother and her gen le child. But the ashes of the father do not ming'e with theirs; nor from that night forward, did the attorney ever gain the remotest clew to the subsequent history of his queer client."



As the old man concluded his tale, he advanced to a peg in one corner, and taking down his hat and coat, put them on with great deliberation; and, without saying another word, walked slowly away. As the gentleman with the Mo aic studs had fallen asleep, and the major part of the company were deeply occupied in the humorous process of dropping melted tallow-grease into his brandy and water, Mr. Pickwick departed unnoticed. and having settled his own score, and that of Mr. Weller. he issued forth, in company with that gentleman, from beneath the portal of the Magpie and Stump.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. PICKWICK JOURNEYS TO IPSWICH, AND MEETS WITH A ROMANTIC ADVENTURE WITH A MIDELE-AGED LADY, IN YELLOW CURL PAPERS.

"THAT 'ere your governor's luggage, Sammy?" inquired Mr. Weller, senior, of his affectionate son, as he entered the yard of the Bull Inn, Whitechapel, with a travelling bag, and a small portmanteau.

"You might ha' made a worser guess than that, old feller," replied Mr. Weller, the younger, setting down his burden in the yard, and sitting himself down upon it afterwards. "The governor himself 'll be down here presently."

"He's a cabbin' it, I suppose?" said the father.

"Yes, he's a havin' two mile o' danger at eight-pence," responded the son. "How's mother-in-law this morn'?"

"Queer, Sammy, queer," replied the elder Mr. Weller, with impressive gravity. "She's been get-tin' rayther in the Methodistical order, lately, Sammy; and she is uncommon pious, to be sure. She's too good a creetur for me, Sammy—I feel I don't deserve her."

"Ah," said Mr. Samuel, "that's werry self-de-nyin' o' you."

"Werry," replied his parent, with a sigh. "She's

got hold o' some inwention for grown-up people being born again, Sammy—the new birth, I thinks they calls it. I should wesry much like to see that system in haction, Sammy. I should weary much like to see your mother-in-law born again. Wouldn't I put her out to nurse?"

"What do you think them women does t'other day," continued Mr. Weller, after a short pause, during which he had significantly struck the side of his nose with his fore-finger, some half-dozen times. "What do you think they does t'other day, Sammy?"

"Don't know," replied Sam, "what?"

"Goes and gets up a grand tea drinkin' for a feller they calls their shepherd," said Mr. Weller. "I was a standing starin' in, at the pictur shop, down at our place, when I sees a little bill about it; 'tickets half-a-crown. All applications to be made to the committee. Secretary, Mrs. Weller;' and when I got home, there was the committee a sittin' in our back parlour—fourteen women; I wish you could ha' heard 'em, Sammy. There they was, a passin' resolutions, and wotin' supplies, and all sorts o' games. Well, what with your mother-in-law a worrying me to go, and what with my looking for'ard to seein' some queer starts if I did, I put my name down for a ticket; at six o'clock on the Friday evenin' I dresses myself out werry smart, and off I goes with the old 'ooman, and up we walks into a first floor, where there was tea things for thirty, and a whole lot o' women as begins whisperin' to one another, and lookin' at me, as if they'd never seen a rayther stout gen'lm'n of eight-and-fifty afore. By and by, there comes a great bustle down stairs, and a lanky chap, with a red nose and white neckcloth, rushes up, and sings out, 'Here's the shepherd a coming to wisit his faithful flock;' and in comes a fat chap in black, with a great white face, a smilin' avay like clock-

work. Such goin's on, Sammy. 'The kiss of peace,' says the shepherd; and then he kissed the women all round, and ven he'd done, the man with the red nose began. I was just a thinkin' whether I hadn't better begin too—'specially as there was a werry nice lady a sittin' next me—ven in comes the tea, and your mother-in-law, as had been makin' the kettle boil, down stairs. At it they went, tooth and nail. Such a precious loud hymn, Sammy, while the tea was a brewing: such a grace, such eatin' and drinkin'. I wish you could ha' seen the shepherd walkin' into the ham and muffins. I never see such a chap to eat and drink—never. The red-nosed man warn't by no means the sort of person you'd like to grub by contract, but he was nothin' to the shepherd. Well, arter the tea was over, they sang another hymn, and then the shepherd began to preach: and werry well he did it, considerin' how heavy them muffins must have lied on his chest. Presently he pulls up, all of a sudden, and hollers out, 'Where is the sinner; where is the miserable sinner?' upon which, all the women looked at me, and began to groan as if they was dying. I thought it was rather sing'ler, but hows'ever, I says nothing. Presently he pulls up again, and lookin' very hard at me, says, 'Where is the sinner; where is the miserable sinner?' and all the women groans again, ten times louder than afore. I got rather savage at this, so I takes a step or two for'ard and says, 'My friend,' says I, 'did you apply that e're observation to me?'—'Stead of beggin' my pardon as any gen'lm'n would ha' done, he got more abusive than ever; called me a wessel, Sammy—a wessel of wrath—and all sorts o' names. So my blood being reg'larly up, I first gave him two or three for himself, and then two or three more to hand over to the man with the red nose, and walked off. I wish you could ha' heard how the women screamed, Sammy, ven

they picked up the shepherd from under the table. Hallo! here's the governor, the size of life."

As Mr. Weller spoke, Mr. Pickwick dismounted from a cab, and entered the yard.

"Fine mornin,' sir," said Mr. Weller, senior.

"Beautiful, indeed,"—replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Beautiful, indeed," echoed a red-haired man, with an inquisitive nose and blue spectacles, who had unpacked himself from a cab at the same moment, as Mr. Pickwick. "Going to Ipswich, sir?"

"I am," replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Extraordinary coincidence. So am I."

Mr. Pickwick bowed.

"Going outside?" said the red-haired man.

Mr. Pickwick bowed again.

"Bless my soul, how remarkable—I am going outside, too," said the red-haired man: "we are positively going together." And, the red-haired man, who was an important-looking, sharp-nosed, mysterious-spoken personage, with a bird-like habit of giving his head a jerk every time he said any thing, smiled as if he had made one of the strangest discoveries that ever fell to the lot of human wisdom.

"I am happy in the prospect of your company, sir," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah," said the new-comer, "it's a good thing for both of us, isn't it? Company, you see—company is—is—it's a very different thing from solitude—a'n't it?"

"There's no denyin' that 'ere," said Mr. Weller, joining in the conversation, with an affable smile. "That's what I call a self-evident proposition, as the dog's-meat man said, when the house-maid told him he warn't a gentleman."

"Ah," said the red-haired man, surveying Mr. Weller from head to foot, with a supercilious look. "Friend of yours, sir?"

"Not exactly a friend," replied Mr. Pickwick,

in a low tone. "The fact is, he is my servant, but I allow him to take a good many liberties; for, between ourselves, I flatter myself he is an original, and I am rather proud of him."

"Ah," said the red-haired man, "that, you see is a matter of taste. I am not fond of any thing original; I don't like it; don't see the necessity for it. What's your name, sir?"

"Here is my card, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, much amused by the abruptness of the question, and the singular manner of the stranger.

"Ah," said the red-haired man, placing the card in his pocket-book, "Pickwick; very good. I like to know a man's name, it saves so much trouble. That's my card, sir. Magnus, you will perceive, sir—Magnus is my name. It's rather a good name, I think, sir?"

"A very good name, indeed," said Mr. Pickwick, wholly unable to repress a smile.

"Yes, I think it is," resumed Mr. Magnus. "There's a good name before it, too, you will observe. Permit me, sir—if you hold the card a little slanting, this way, you catch the light upon the up-stroke. There—Peter Magnus—sounds well, I think, sir."

"Very," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Curious circumstance about those initials, sir," said Mr. Magnus. "You will observe—P. M.—post meridian. In hasty notes to intimate acquaintance. I sometimes sign myself 'Afternoon.' It amuses my friends very much, Mr. Pickwick."

"It is calculated to afford them the highest gratification, I should conceive," said Mr. Pickwick, rather envying the ease with which Mr. Magnus's friends were entertained.

"Now, gen'lm'n," said the hostler, "coach is ready, if you please."

"Is all my luggage in?" inquired Mr. Magnus.

"All right, sir."

"Is the red bag in?"

"All right, sir."

"And the striped bag?"

"'Fore boot, sir."

"And the brown-paper parcel?"

"Under the seat, sir."

"And the leathern hat-box?"

"They're all in, sir."

"Now, will you get up?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Excuse me," replied Magnus, standing on the wheel. "Excuse me, Mr. Pickwick. I cannot consent to get up in this state of uncertainty. I am quite satisfied from that man's manner, that that leathern hat-box is *not* in."

The solemn protestations of the hostler being wholly unavailing, the leathern hat-box was obliged to be raked up from the lowest depth of the boot, to satisfy him that it had been safely packed; and after he had been assured on this head, he felt a solemn presentiment, first, that the red bag was mislaid, and next that the striped bag had been stolen, and then that the brown paper parcel had "come untied." At length, when he had received ocular demonstration of the groundless nature of each and every of these suspicions, he consented to climb up to the roof of the coach, observing that now he had taken every thing off his mind, he felt quite comfortable and happy.

"You're given to nervousness, an't you, sir?" inquired Mr. Weller, senior, eyeing the stranger askance, as he mounted to his place.

"Yes; I always am, rather, about these little matters," said the stranger, "but I am all right, now,—quite right."

"Well, that's a blessin'," said Mr. Weller.—"Sammy, help your master up to the box; t'other leg, sir, that's it; give us your hand, sir. Up with you. You was a lighter weight when you was a boy, sir."

"True enough, that, Mr. Weller," said the breathless Mr. Pickwick, good-humouredly, as he took his seat on the box beside him.

"Jump up in front, Sammy," said Mr. Weller. "Now, Villam, run'em out. Take care of the archvay, gen'lm'n. 'Heads,' as the pieman says. That'll do, Villam. Let 'em alone." And away went the coach up Whitechapel, to the admiration of the whole population of that pretty densely populated quarter.

"Not a werry nice neighbourhood this, sir," said Sam, with the touch of the hat which always preceded his entering into conversation with his master.

"It is not, indeed, Sam," replied Mr. Pickwick, surveying the crowded and filthy street through which they were passing.

"It's a werry remarkable circumstance, sir," said Sam, "that poverty and oysters always seems to go together."

"I don't understand you, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick.

"What I mean, sir," said Sam, "is, that the poorer a place is, the greater call there seems to be for oysters. Look here, sir; here's a oyster stall to every half-dozen houses—the street's lined vith 'em. Blessed if I don't think that ven a man's werry poor, he rushes out of his lodgings, and eats oysters in reg'lar desperation."

"To be sure he does," said Mr. Weller, senior, "and it's just the same with pickled salmon!"

"Those are two very remarkable facts, which never occurred to me before," said Mr. Pickwick, "The very first place we stop at, I'll make a note of them."

By this time they had reached the turnpike at Mile End; a profound silence prevailed, until they had got two or three miles further on, when Mr.

Weller, senior, turning suddenly to Mr. Pickwick, said—

"Wherry queer life is a pike-keeper's sir."

"A what?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"A pike-keeper."

"What do you mean by a pike-keeper?" inquired Mr. Peter Magnus.

"The old'un means a turnpike keeper, gen'lm'n," observed Mr. Weller, in explanation.

"Oh," said Mr. Pickwick, "I see. Yes, very curious life. Very uncomfortable."

"They're all on 'em men as has met vith some disappointment in life," said Mr. Weller, senior.

"Ay, ay?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes. Consequence of vich, they retires from the world, and shuts themselves up in pikes; partly with the view of being solitary, and partly to rewenge themselves on mankind, by takin' tolls."

"Dear me," said Mr. Pickwick, "I never knew that before."

"Fact, sir," said Mr. Weller, "if they was gen'lm'n, you'd call 'em misanthropes, but as it is they only takes to pike-keepin'."

With such conversation, possessing the inestimable charm of blending amusement with instruction, did Mr. Weller beguile the tediousness of the journey, during the greater part of the day. Topics of conversation were never wanting, for even when any pause occurred in Mr. Weller's loquacity, it was abundantly supplied by the desire evinced by Mr. Magnus to make himself acquainted with the whole of the personal history of his fellow-travellers, and his loudly expressed anxiety at every stage, respecting the safety and well-being of the two bags, the leathern hat-box, and the brown paper parcel.

In the main street of Ipswich, on the left hand side of the way, a short distance after you have passed through the open space fronting the Town

Hall, stands an inn known far and wide by the appellation of "The Great White Horse," rendered the more conspicuous by a stone statue of some rampacious animal, with flowing mane and tail, distantly resembling an insane cart-horse, which is elevated above the principal door. The Great White Horse is famous in the neighbourhood, in the same degree as a prize ox, or county paper-chronicled turnip, or unwieldy pig—for its enormous size. Never were such labyrinths of uncarpeted passages, such clusters of mouldy, badly-lighted rooms, such huge numbers of small dens for eating or sleeping in, beneath any one roof, as are collected together between the four walls of the Great White Horse at Ipswich.

It was at the door of this overgrown tavern that the London coach stopped at the same hour every evening; and it was from this same London coach that Mr. Pickwick, Sam Weller, and Mr. Peter Magnus dismounted, on the particular evening to which this chapter of our history bears reference.

"Do you stop here, sir?" inquired Mr. Peter Magnus, when the striped bag, and the red bag, and the brown paper parcel, and the leathern hat-box, had all been deposited in the passage. "Do you stop here, sir?"

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Dear me," said Mr. Magnus, "I never knew any thing like these extraordinary coincidences. Why, I stop here, too. I hope we dine together?"

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Pickwick. "I am not quite certain whether I have any friends here or not, though. Is there any gentleman of the name of Tupman here, waiter?"

A corpulent man, with a fortnight's napkin under his arm, and coeval stockings on his legs, slowly desisted from his occupation of staring down the street, on this question being put to him by Mr. Pickwick; and after minutely inspecting that gen-

tleman's appearance, from the crown of his hat to the lowest button of his gaiters, replied emphatically—

"No."

"Nor any gentleman of the name of Snodgrass?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"No!"

"Nor Winkle?"

"No."

"My friends have not arrived to-day, sir," said Mr. Pickwick. "We will dine alone, then. "Show us a private room, waiter."

On this request being preferred, the corpulent man condescended to order the boots to bring in the gentlemen's luggage, and preceding them down a long dark passage, ushered them into a large, badly furnished apartment, with a dirty grate, in which a small fire was making a wretched attempt to be cheerful, but was fast sinking beneath the dispiriting influence of the place. After the lapse of an hour, a bit of fish and a steak, were served up to the travellers, and when the dinner was cleared away, Mr. Pickwick and Mr. Peter Magnus drew their chairs up to the fire, and having ordered a bottle of the worst possible port wine, at the highest possible price, for the good of the house, drank brandy and water for their own.

Mr. Peter Magnus was naturally of a very communicative disposition, and the brandy and water operated with wonderful effect in warming into life the deepest hidden secrets of his bosom. After sundry accounts of himself, his family, his connexions, his friends, his jokes, his business, and his brothers (most talkative men have a great deal to say about their brothers,) Mr. Peter Magnus took a blue view of Mr. Pickwick through his coloured spectacles for several minutes, and then said, with an air of modesty—

"And what do you think—what do you think, Mr. Pickwick—I have come down here for?"

"Upon my word," said Mr. Pickwick, "it is wholly impossible for me to guess: on business, perhaps."

"Partly right, sir," replied Mr. Peter Magnus, "but partly wrong, at the same time: try again, Mr. Pickwick."

"Really," said Mr. Pickwick, "I must throw myself on your mercy, to tell me or not, as you may think best; for I should never guess, if I were to try all night."

"Why, then, he—he—he!" said Mr. Peter Magnus, with a bashful titter, "what should you think, Mr. Pickwick, if I had come down here to make a proposal, sir, eh? he—he—he!"

"Think! that you are very likely to succeed," replied Mr. Pickwick, with one of his most beaming smiles.

"Ah!" said Mr. Magnus, but do you really think so, Mr. Pickwick? Do you, though?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Pickwick.

"No, but you're joking, though."

"I am not, indeed."

"Why, then," said Mr. Magnus, "to let you into a little secret, *I* think so too. I don't mind telling you, Mr. Pickwick, although I'm dreadful jealous by nature—horrid—that the lady is in this house." Here Mr. Magnus took off his spectacles, on purpose to wink, and then put them on again.

"That's what you were running out of the room for, before dinner, then, so often," said Mr. Pickwick, archly.

"Hush—yes, you're right, that was it; not such a fool as to see her, though."

"No!"

"No; wouldn't do, you know, after having just come off a journey. Wait till to-morrow, sir, double the chance then. Mr. Pickwick, sir, there is a suit of clothes in that bag, and a hat in that box,

which I expect, in the effect they will produce, will be invaluable to me, sir."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Yes; you must have observed my anxiety about them to-day. I do not believe that such another suit of clothes, and such a hat, could be bought for money, Mr. Pickwick."

Mr. Pickwick congratulated the fortunate owner of the irresistible garments, on their acquisition; and Mr. Peter Magnus remained for a few moments, apparently absorbed in contemplation.

"She's a fine creature," said Mr. Magnus.

"Is she?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Very," said Mr. Magnus, "very. She lives about twenty miles from here, Mr. Pickwick. I heard she would be here to-night and all to-morrow forenoon, and came down to seize the opportunity. I think an inn is a good sort of place to propose to a single woman in, Mr. Pickwick. She is more likely to feel the loneliness of her situation in travelling, perhaps, than she would be at home. What do you think, Mr. Pickwick?"

"I think it very probable," replied that gentleman.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Pickwick," said Mr. Peter Magnus, "but I am naturally rather curious; what may *you* have come down here for?"

"On a far less pleasant errand, sir," replied Mr. Pickwick, the colour mounting to his face at the recollection—"I have come down here, sir, to expose the treachery and falsehood of an individual, upon whose truth and honour I placed implicit reliance."

"Dear me," said Mr. Peter Magnus, "that's very unpleasant. It is a lady, I presume? Eh? ah! Sly, Mr. Pickwick, sly. Well, Mr. Pickwick, sir, I wouldn't probe your feelings for the world. Painful subjects, these, sir, very painful. Don't mind me, Mr. Pickwick, if you wish to give vent

to your feelings. I know what it is to be jilted, sir; I have endured that sort of thing three or four times."

"I am much obliged to you for your condolence on what you presume to be my melancholy case," said Mr. Pickwick, winding up his watch, and laying it on the table, "but—"

"No, no," said Mr. Peter Magnus, "not a word more: it's a painful subject, I see, I see. What's the time, Mr. Pickwick?"

"Past twelve."

"Dear me, it's time to go to bed. It will never do sitting here. I shall be pale to-morrow, Mr. Pickwick."

At the bare notion of such a calamity, Mr. Peter Magnus rang the bell for the chamber-maid; and the striped bag, the red bag, the leathern hat-box, and the brown paper parcel, having been conveyed to his bed room, he retired in company with a jepanned candle stick, to one side of the house, while Mr. Pickwick and another jepanned candlestick, were conducted through a multitude of tortuous windings, to another.

"This is your room, sir," said the chamber-maid.

"Very well," replied Mr. Pickwick, looking round him. It was a tolerably large double bedded room, with a fire; upon the whole, a more comfortable looking apartment than Mr. Pickwick's short experience of the accommodations of the Great White Horse had led him to expect.

"Nobody sleeps in the other bed, of course," said Mr. Pickwick,

"Oh no, sir."

"Very good. Tell my servant to bring me up some hot water at half past eight in the morning and that I shall not want him any more to-night."

"Yes, sir." And bidding Mr. Pickwick good

night, the chamber-maid retired, and left him alone.

Mr. Pickwick sat himself down in a chair before the fire, and fell into a train of rambling meditations. First, he thought of his friends, and wondered when they would join him; then his mind reverted to Mrs. Martha Burdell; and from that lady it wandered, by a natural process, to the dingy counting-house of Dodson and Fogg. From Dodson and Fogg's it flew off at a tangent, to the very centre of the history of the queer client: and then it came back to the Great White Horse, at Ipswich, with sufficient clearness to convince Mr. Pickwick that he was falling asleep; so he roused himself, and began to undress, when he recollected he had left his watch on the table down stairs.

Now this watch was a special favourite with Mr. Pickwick, having been carried about, beneath the shadow of his waistcoat, for a greater number of years than we feel called upon to state at present. The possibility of going to sleep, unless it were ticking gently beneath his pillow, or in the watch-pocket over his head, had never entered Mr. Pickwick's brain. So, as it was pretty late now, and he was unwilling to ring his bell at that hour of the night, he slipped on his coat, of which he had just divested himself, and taking the japanned candlestick in his hand, walked quietly down stairs.

The more stairs Mr, Pickwick went down, the more stairs there seemed to be to descend, and again and again, when Mr. Pickwick got into some narrow passage, and began to congratulate himself on having gained the ground-floor, did another flight of stairs appear before his astonished eyes. At last he reached a stone hall, which he remembered to have seen when he entered the house. Passage after passage did he explore; room after

room did he peep into; at length, just as he was on the point of giving up the search in despair, he opened the door of the identical room in which he had spent the evening, and beheld his missing property on the table.

Mr. Pickwick seized the watch in triumph, and proceeded to retrace his steps to his bed-chamber. If his progress downwards had been attended with difficulties and uncertainty, his journey back was infininitely more perplexing. Rows of doors, garnished with boots of every shape, make, and size, branched off in every possible direction. A dozen times did he softly turn the handle of some bedroom door, which resembled his own, when a gruff cry from within of "Who the devil's that?" or "What do you want here?" caused him to steal away, on tiptoe, with a perfectly marvellous celerity. He was reduced to the verge of despair, when an open door attracted his attention. He peeped in—right at last. There were the two beds, whose situation he perfectly remembered, and the fire still burning. His candle, not a long one when he first received it, had flickered away in the draughts of air through which he had passed, and sunk into the socket, just as he closed the door after him. "No matter," said Mr. Pickwick, "I can undress myself just as well, by the light of the fire."

The bedsteads stood, one on each side of the door! and on the inner side of each was a little path, terminating in a rush-botomed chair, just wide enough to admit of a person's getting into, or out of bed, on that side, if he or she thought proper. Having carefully drawn the curtains of his bed on the outside, Mr. Pickwick sat down on the rush-bottomed chair, and leisurely divested himself of his shoes and gaiters. He then took off

and folded up his coat, waistcoat, and neck-cloth, and slowly drawing on his tasseled night-cap, secured it firmly on his head, by tying beneath his chin the strings which he always had attached to that article of dress. It was at this moment that the absurdity of his recent bewilderment struck upon his mind; and throwing himself back in the rush-bottomed chair, Mr. Pickwick laughed to himself so heartily, that it would have been quite delightful to any man of well-constituted mind to have watched the smiles which expanded his amiable features as they shone forth, from beneath the night-cap.

"It is the best idea," said Mr. Pickwick to himself, smiling, till he almost cracked the night-cap strings—"It is the best idea, my losing myself in this place, and wandering about those staircases, that I ever heard of. Droll, droll, very droll." Here Mr. Pickwick smiled again, a broader smile than before, and was about to continue the process of undressing, in the best possible humour, when he was suddenly stopped by a most unexpected interruption; to wit, the entrance into the room of some person with a candle, who, after locking the door, advanced to the dressing table, and set down the light upon it.

The smile that played on Mr. Pickwick's features, was instantaneously lost in a look of the most unbounded and wonder-stricken surprise. The person, whoever it was, had come in so suddenly, and with so little noise, that Mr. Pickwick had had no time to call out or oppose their entrance. Who could it be? A robber? Some evil-minded person, who had seen him come up stairs with a handsome watch in his hand, perhaps. What was he to do?

The only way in which Mr. Pickwick could catch a glimpse of his mysterious visiter with the

least danger of being seen himself, was, by creeping on to the bed, and peeping out from between the curtains on the opposite side. To this manœuvre he accordingly resorted. Keeping the curtains carefully closed with his hand, so that nothing more of him could be seen than his face and night-cap, and putting on his spectacles, he mustered up courage, and looked out

Mr. Pickwick almost fainted with horror and dismay. Standing before the dressing glass, was a middle-aged lady in yellow curl papers, busily engaged in brushing what ladies call their "black hair." However the unconscious middle-aged lady came into that room, it was quite clear that she contemplated remaining there for the night; for she had brought a rushlight and shade with her, which, with praiseworthy precaution against fire, she had stationed in a basin on the floor, where it was glimmering away, like a gigantic light-house, in a particularly small piece of water.

"Bless my soul," thought Mr. Pickwick, "what a dreadful thing!"

"Hem!" said the lady; and in went Mr. Pickwick's head, with automaton-like rapidity.

"I never met with any thing so awful as this," thought poor Mr. Pickwick, the cold perspiration starting in drops upon his night-cap. "Never.—This is fearful."

It was quite impossible to resist the urgent desire to see what was going forward. So out went Mr. Pickwick's head again. The prospect was worse than before. The middle-aged lady had finished arranging her hair; had carefully enveloped it in a muslin night-cap, with a small plaited border, and was gazing pensively on the fire.

"This matter is growing alarming,"—reasoned Mr. Pickwick with himself. "I cant allow things to go on in this way. By the self possession of

that lady, it's clear to me that I must have come into the wrong room. If I call out, she'll alarm the house, but if I remain here the consequences will be still more frightful."

Mr. Pickwick, it is quite unnecessary to say, was one of the most modest and delicate-minded of mortals. The very idea of exhibiting his night-cap to a lady, overpowered him, but he had tied those confounded strings in a knot, and do what he would, he couldn't get it off. The disclosure must be made. There was only one other way of doing it. He shrunk behind the curtains, and called out very loudly,

"Ha—um."

That the lady started at this unexpected sound was evident, by her falling up against the rush-light shade; that she persuaded herself it must have been the effect of imagination was equally clear, for when Mr. Pickwick, under the impression that she had fainted away, stone dead from fright, ventured to peep out again, she was gazing pensively on the fire as before.

"Most extraordinary female this," thought Mr. Pickwick, popping in again. "Ha—um."

These last sounds, so like those in which, as legends inform us, the ferocious giant Blunderbore was in the habit of expressing his opinion that it was time to lay the cloth, were too distinctly audible, to be again mistaken for the workings of fancy.

"Gracious Heaven!" said the middle-aged lady; "what's that!"

"It's—it's—only a gentleman, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick from behind the curtains.

"A gentleman!" said the lady with a terrific scream.

"It's all over," thought Mr. Pickwick.

"A strange man!" shrieked the lady. Another

instant, and the house would be alarmed. Her garments rustled as she rushed towards the door.

"Ma'am"—said Mr. Pickwick, thrusting out his head, in the extremity of his desperation, "Ma'am."

Now although Mr. Pickwick was not actuated by any definite object in putting out his head, it was instantaneously productive of a good effect. The lady, as we have already stated, was near the door. She must pass it, to reach the staircase, and she would most undoubtedly have done so, by this time, had not the sudden apparition of Mr. Pickwick's night-cap driven her back, into the remotest corner of the apartment, where she stood, staring wildly at Mr. Pickwick, while Mr. Pickwick, in his turn, stared wildly at her.

"Wretch,"—said the lady, covering her eyes with her hands, "what do you want here?"

"Nothing, ma'am—nothing whatever, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, earnestly.

"Nothing!" said the lady, looking up.

"Nothing, ma'am, upon my honour," said Mr. Pickwick, nodding his head so energetically, that the tassel of his night-cap danced again. "I am almost ready to sink, ma'am, beneath the confusion of addressing a lady in my night-cap (here the lady hastily snatched off hers,) but I can't get it off, ma'am, here Mr. Pickwick gave it a tremendous tug, in proof of the statement. It is evident to me, ma'am, now, that I have mistaken this bed-room for my own. I had not been here five minutes, ma'am, when you suddenly entered it."

"If this improbable story be really true, sir"—said the lady, sobbing violently, "you will leave it instantly."

"I will, ma'am, with the greatest pleasure"—replied Mr. Pickwick.

"Instantly, sir," said the lady.

"Certainly, ma'am," interposed Mr. Pickwick, very quickly. "Certainly, ma'am. I—I—am very sorry, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, making his appearance at the bottom of the bed, "to have been the innocent occasion of this alarm and emotion; deeply sorry, ma'am."

The lady pointed to the door. One excellent quality of Mr. Pickwick's character was beautifully displayed at this moment, under the most trying circumstances. Although he had hastily put on his hat over his night-cap, after the manner of the old patrol; although he carried his shoes and gaiters in his hand, and his coat and waistcoat over his arm, nothing could subdue his native politeness.

"I am exceedingly sorry, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick, bowing very low.

"If you are, sir, you will at once leave the room. said the lady.

"Immediately, ma'am; this instant, ma'am," said Mr. Pickwick opening the door, and dropping both his shoes, with a loud crash in so doing.

"I trust, ma'am," resumed Mr. Pickwick, gathering up his shoes, and turning round to bow again. "I trust, ma'am, that my unblemished character, and the devoted respect I entertain for your sex, will plead as some slight excuse for this"—But before Mr. Pickwick could conclude his sentence, the lady had thrust him into the passage, and locked and bolted the door behind him.

Whatever grounds of self-congratulation Mr. Pickwick might have, for having escaped so quietly from his late awkward situation, his present position was by no means enviable. He was alone, in an open passage, in a strange house, in the middle of the night, half-dressed; it was not to be supposed that he could find his way in perfect dark ness to a room which he had been wholly unable to discover with a light, and if he made the slightest noise in his fruitless attempts to do so, he stood

every chance of being shot at, and perhaps killed, by some wakeful traveller. He had no resource but to remain where he was, until daylight appeared. So after groping his way a few paces down the passage, and to his infinite alarm, stumbling over several pairs of boots in so doing, Mr. Pickwick crouched into a little recess in the wall, to wait for morning, as philosophically as he might.

He was not destined, however, to undergo this additional trial of patience: for he had not been long ensconced in his present concealment when, to his unspeakable horror, a man, bearing a light, appeared at the end of the passage. His horror was suddenly converted into joy, however, when he recognised the form of his faithful attendant. It was indeed Mr. Samuel Weller, who after sitting up thus late, in conversation with the Boots, who was sitting up for the mail, was now about to retire to rest.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick, suddenly appearing before him, "Where's my bed-room!"

Mr. Weller stared at his master with the most emphatic surprise; and it was not until the question had been repeated three several times, that he turned round, and led the way to the long-sought apartment.

"Sam," said Mr. Pickwick as he got into bed. "I have made one of the most extraordinary mistakes to-night, that ever were heard of."

"Werry likely, sir," replied Mr. Weller drily.

"But of this I am determined, Sam," said Mr. Pickwick; "that if I were to stop in this house for six months, I would never trust myself about it, alone, again."

"That's the werry prudentest resolution as you could come to, sir," replied Mr. Weller. "You rayther want somebody to look arter you sir, ven your judgment goes out a wisitin'."

"What do you mean by that Sam?" said Mr. Pickwick. He raised himself in bed, and extended his hand, as if he were about to say something more; but suddenly checking himself, turned round, and bade his valet "Good night."

"Good night, sir," replied Mr. Weller. He paused when he got outside the door—shook his head—walked on—stopped—snuffed the candle—shook his head again—and finally proceeded slowly to his chamber, apparently buried in the profoundest meditation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IN WHICH MR. SAMUEL WELLER BEGINS TO DEVOTE HIS ENERGIES TO THE RETURN MATCH BETWEEN HIMSELF AND MR. TROTTER.

In a small room in the vicinity of the stable-yard, betimes in the morning, which was ushered in by Mr. Pickwick's adventure with the middle-aged lady in the yellow curl-papers, sat Mr. Weller, senior, preparing himself for his journey to London. He was sitting in an excellent attitude for having his portrait taken; and here it is.

It is very possible that at some earlier period of his career, Mr. Weller's profile might have presented a bold, and determined outline. His face, however, had expanded under the influence of good living, and a disposition remarkable for resignation; and its bold fleshy curves had so far extended beyond the limits originally assigned them, that unless you took a full view of his countenance in front, it was difficult to distinguish more than the extreme tip of a very rubicund nose. His chin, from the same cause, had acquired the grave and imposing form which is generally described by prefixing the word "double" to that expressive feature, and his complexion exhibited that peculiarly mottled combination of colours,

which is only to be seen in gentlemen of his profession, and underdone roast beef. Round his neck he wore a crimson travelling shawl, which merged into his chin by such imperceptible gradations, that it was difficult to distinguish the folds of the one, from the folds of the other. Over this he mounted a long waistcoat of a broad pink-striped pattern, and over that again, a wide-skirted green coat, ornamented with large brass buttons, whereof the two which garnished the waist, were so far apart, that no man had ever beheld them both at the same time. His hair, which was short, sleek, and black, was just visible beneath the capacious brim of a low-crowned brown hat. His legs were encased in knee-cord breeches, and painted-top boots: and a copper watch-chain terminating in one seal, and a key of the same material dangled loosely from his capacious waist-band.

We have said that Mr. Weller was engaged in preparing for his journey to London—he was taking sustenance, in fact. On the table before him stood a pot of ale, a cold round of beef, and a very respectable-looking loaf, to each side of which he distributed his favours in turn, with the most rigid impartiality. He had just cut a mighty slice from the latter, when the footsteps of somebody entering the room, caused him to raise his head; and he beheld his son.

"Mornin', Sammy," said the father.

The son walked up to the pot of ale, and nodding significantly to his parent, took a long draught by way of reply.

"Werry good power o' suction, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, the elder, looking into the pot, when his first-born had set it down half empty. "You'd ha' made an uncommon fine oyster, Sammy, if you'd been born in that station o' life."

"Yes, I des-say I should ha' managed to pick up

a respectable livin'," replied Sam, applying himself to the cold beef, with considerable vigour.

"I'm werry sorry, Sammy," said the elder Mr. Weller, shaking up the ale, by describing small circles with the pot, preparatory to drinking. "I'm werry sorry, Sammy, to hear from your lips, as you let yourself be gammoned by that 'ere mulberry man. I always thought, up to three days ago, that the names of Veller and gammon could never cominto contract, Sammy—never."

"Always exceptin' the case of a widder, of course," said Sam.

"Widders, Sammy, replied Mr. Weller, slightly changing colour. "Widders are 'ceptions to ev'ry rule. I *have* heerd how many ord'nary women, one widder's equal to, in pint o' comin' over you. I think it's five-and-twenty, but I don't rightly know vether it ain't more."

"Well; that's pretty well," said Sam.

"Besides," continued Mr. Weller, not noticing the interruption, "that's a werry different thing. You know what the counsel said, Sammy, as defended the genl'm'n as beat his wife with the poker, venever he got jolly. 'And arter all, my lord,' says he, 'it's a amiable weakness.' So I says respectin' widders, Sammy, and so you'll say, ven you gets as old as I am."

"I ought to ha' know'd better, I know," said Sam.

"Ought to ha' know'd better!" repeated Mr. Weller, striking the table with his fist. "Ought to ha' know'd better! why, I know a young 'un as hasn't had half nor quarter your edication—as hasn't slept about the markets, no, not six months; who'd ha' scorned to be let in, in such a vay; scorned it, Sammy." In the excitement of feeling produced by this agonizing reflection, Mr. Weller rang the bell, and ordered an additional pint of ale.

"Well, it's no use talkin' about it now," said Sam. "It's over, and can't be helped, and that's one consolation, as they alvays says in Turkey, ven they cuts the wrong man's head off. It's my innings now, gov'rnor, and as soon as I catches hold o' this here Trotter, I'll have a good 'un."

"I hope you will, Sammy. I hope you will," returned Mr. Weller. "Here's your health, Sammy, and may you speedily vipe off the disgrace as you've inflicted on the family name." In honour of this toast Mr. Weller imbibed at a draught, at least two-thirds of the newly-arrived pint, and handed it over to his son, to dispose of the remainder, which he instantaneously did.

"And now, Sammy," said Mr. Weller, consulting the large double-cased silver watch that hung at the end of the copper chain. "Now, it's time I was up at the office to get my vay-bill, and see the coach loaded; for coaches, Sammy, is like guns—they requires to be loaded with werry great care, afore they go off."

At this parental and professional joke, Mr. Weller, junior, smiled a filial smile. His revered parent continued in a solemn tone—

"I'm a goin' to leave you, Samivel, my boy, and there's no telling ven I shall see you again. Your mother-in-law may ha' been too much for me, or a thousand things may have happened by the time you next hears any news o' the celebrated Mr. Veller o' the Bell Savage. The family name depends werry much upon you, Samivel, and I hope you'll do wot's right by it. Upon all little pints o' breedin', I know I may trust you as vell as if it was my own self. So I've only this here one little bit of adwice to give you. If ever you gets to up-'ards of fifty, and feels disposed to go a marryin' any body—no matter who—jist you shut yourself up in your own room, if you've got one, and pison

yourself off hand. Hangin's wulgar, so don't you have nothin' to say to that. Pison yourself, Samivel my boy, pison yourself, and you'll be glad on it arterwards." With these affecting words, Mr. Weller looked steadfastly on his son, and turning slowly upon his heel, disappeared from his sight.

In the contemplative mood which these words had awakened, Mr. Samuel Weller walked forth from the Great White Horse when his father had left him; and bending his steps towards Saint Clement's Church, endeavoured to dissipate his melancholy, by strolling among its ancient precincts. He had loitered about, for some time, when he found himself in a retired spot—a kind of court-yard of venerable appearance—which he discovered had no other outlet than the turning by which he had entered. He was about retracing his steps, when he was suddenly transfixed to the spot by a sudden appearance; and the mode and manner of this appearance, we now proceed to relate.

Mr. Samuel Weller had been staring up, at the old red brick houses; now and then, in his deep abstraction, bestowing a wink upon some healthy-looking servant girl as she drew up a blind, or threw open a bed-room window, when the green gate of a garden at the bottom of the yard, opened, and a man having emerged therefrom, closed the green gate very carefully after him, and walked briskly towards the very spot where Mr. Weller was standing.

Now, taking this as an isolated fact, unaccompanied by any attendant circumstances, there was nothing very extraordinary in it, because in many parts of the world, men do come out of gardens, close green gates after them, and even walk briskly away, without attracting any particular share of public observation. It is clear, therefore, that there must have been something in the man, or in his

manner, or both, to attract Mr. Weller's particular notice. Whether there was, or not, we must leave the reader to determine, when we have faithfully recounted the behaviour of the individual in question.

When the man had shut the green gate after him, he walked, as we have said twice already, with a brisk pace up the court-yard: but he no sooner caught sight of Mr. Weller, than he faltered, and stopped, as if uncertain for the moment what course to adopt. As the green gate was closed behind him, and there was no other outlet but the one in front, however, he was not long in perceiving that he must pass Mr. Samuel Weller to get away. He therefore resumed his brisk pace, and advanced, staring straight before him. The most extraordinary thing about the man was, that he was contorting his face into the most fearful and astonishing grimaces that ever were beheld. Nature's handiwork never was disguised with such extraordinary artificial carving, as the man had overlaid his countenance with, in one moment.

"Well,"—said Mr. Weller to himself, as the man approached. "This is werry odd. I could ha' swore it was him."

Up came the man, and his face became more frightfully distorted than ever, as he drew nearer.

"I could take my oath to that 'ere black hair, and mulberry suit," said Mr. Weller; "only I never see such a face as that, afore."

As Mr. Weller said this, the man's features assumed an unearthly twinge, perfectly hideous. He was obliged to pass very near Sam, however, and the scrutinizing glance of that gentleman enabled him to detect, under all these appalling twists of feature, something too like the small eyes of Mr. Job Trotter, to be easily mistaken.

"Hallo, you sir," shouted Sam, fiercely.

The stranger stopped.

"Hallo," repeated Sam, still more gruffly.

The man with the horrible face, looked, with the greatest surprise, up the court, and down the court, and in at the windows of the houses—every where but at Sam Weller—and took another step forward, when he was brought to again, by another shout.

"Hallo, you sir"—said Sam, for the third time.

There was no pretending to mistake where the voice came from now, so the stranger, having no other resource, at last looked Sam Weller full in the face.

"It won't do, Job Trotter," said Sam. "Come, none o' that 'ere nonsense. You ain't so werry 'ansome that you can afford to throw avay many o' your good looks. Bring them 'ere eyes o' your'n back into their proper places, or I'll knock 'em out of your head. D'ye hear?"

As Mr. Weller appeared fully disposed to act up to the spirit of this address, Mr. Trotter gradually allowed his face to resume its natural expression; and then giving a start of joy, exclaimed, "What do I see? Mr. Walker?"

"Ah," replied Sam—"You're werry glad to see me, ain't you?"

"Glad!" exclaimed Job Trotter—"Oh, Mr. Walker, if you had but known how I have looked forward to this meeting! It is too much, Mr. Walker; I cannot bear it, indeed I cannot." And with these words, Mr. Trotter burst into a regular inundation of tears, and, flinging his arms round those of Mr. Weller, embraced him closely in an ecstasy of joy.

"Get off," cried Sam, highly indignant at this process, and vainly endeavouring to extricate himself from the grasp of his enthusiastic acquaintance—"Get off, I tell you. What are you crying over me for, you portable ingine?"

"Because I am so glad to see you," replied Job

Trotter, gradually releasing Mr. Weller, as the first symptoms of his pugnacity disappeared. "Oh, Mr. Walker, this is too much."

"Too much!" echoed Sam. "I think it is too much—rayther. Now what have you got to say to me, eh?"

Mr. Trotter made no reply; for the little pink pocket handkerchief was in full force.

"What have you got to say to me, afore I knock your head off?" repeated Mr. Weller, in a threatening manner.

"Eh!" said Mr. Trotter, with a look of virtuous surprise.

"What have you got to say to me?"

"I, Mr. Walker!"

"Don't call me Valker; my name's Veller; you know that vell enough. What have you got to say to me?"

"Bless you, Mr. Walker—Weller I mean—a great many things, if you will come away somewhere, where we can talk comfortably. If you knew how I have looked for you, Mr. Weller—"

"Werry hard, indeed, I s'pose?" said Sam, drily.

"Very, very, sir," replied Mr. Trotter, without moving a muscle of his face. "But shake hands, Mr. Weller."

Sam eyed his companion for a few seconds, and then, as if actuated by a sudden impulse, complied with his request.

"How," said Job Trotter, as they walked away —"How is your dear, good master? Oh, he is a worthy gentleman, Mr. Weller. I hope he didn't catch cold, that dreadful night, sir."

There was a momentary look of deep slyness in Job Trotter's eye, as he said this, which ran a thrill through Mr. Weller's clenched fist as he burnt with a desire to make a demonstration on his ribs. Sam constrained himself, however, and replied that his master was extremely well.

"Oh, I am so glad," replied Mr. Trotter, "is he here?"

"Is your'n?" asked Sam, by way of reply.

"Oh, yes, he is here, and I grieve to say, Mr. Weller, he is going on, worse than ever."

"Ah, ah?" said Sam.

"Oh, shocking—terrible."

"At a boarding-school?" said Sam.

"No, not at a boarding-school," replied Job Trotter, with the same sly look which Sam had noticed before—"Not at a boarding-school."

"At the house with the green gate?" inquired Sam, eyeing his companion closely.

"No, no—oh, not there," replied Job; with a quickness very unusual to him, "not there."

"What was *you* a doin' there?" asked Sam, with a sharp glance—"Got inside the gate by accident, perhaps."

"Why, Mr. Weller," replied Job, "I don't mind telling you my little secrets, because you know we took such a fancy for each other when we first met. You recollect how pleasant we were that morning?"

"Oh yes," said Sam, impatiently—"I remember. Well."

"Well," replied Job, speaking with great precision, and in the low tone of a man who communicates an important secret—"In that house with the green gate, Mr. Weller, they keep a good many servants."

"So I should think, from the look on it," interposed Sam.

"Yes," continued Mr. Trotter, "and one of them is a cook, who has saved up a little money, Mr. Weller, and is desirous, if she can establish herself in life, to open a little shop in the chandlery way, you see."

"Yes."

"Yes, Mr. Weller. Well, sir, I met her at a chapel that I go to—a very neat little chapel in this town, Mr. Weller, where they sing the number four collection of hymns, which I generally carry about with me, in a little book, which you may perhaps have seen in my hand—and I got a little intimate with her, Mr. Weller, and from that, an acquaintance sprung up between us; and I may venture to say Mr. Weller, that I am to be the chandler."

"Ah, and a werry amiable chandler you'll make," replied Sam, eyeing Job with a side look of intense dislike.

"The great advantage of this, Mr. Weller," continued Job, his eyes filling with tears as he spoke, "will be, that I shall be able to leave my present disgraceful service with that bad man, and to devote myself to a better and more virtuous life—more like the way in which I was brought up, Mr. Weller."

"You must ha' been werry nicely brought up," said Sam.

"Oh, very, Mr. Weller, very," replied Job; and at the recollection of the purity of his youthful days, Mr. Trotter pulled forth the pink handkerchief, and wept copiously.

"You must ha' been an uncommon nice boy, to go to school vith," said Sam.

"I was, sir," replied Job, heaving a deep sigh. "I was the idol of the place."

"Ah," said Sam, "I don't wonder at it. What a comfort you must ha' been to your blessed mother!"

At these words, Mr. Job Trotter inserted an end of the pink handkerchief into the corner of each eye, one after the other, and began to weep copiously.

"Vhat's the matter vith the man," said Sam in-

dignantly. "Chelsea waterworks is nothin' to you. What are you melting vith now—the consciousness o' willany?"

"I cannot keep my feelings down, Mr. Weller," said Job, after a short pause. "To think that my master should have suspected the conversation I had with yours, and so dragged me away in a post-chaise, and after persuading the sweet young lady to say she knew nothing of him, and bribing the school-mistress to do the same, deserted her for a better speculation,—oh! Mr. Weller, it makes me shudder."

"Oh, that was the vay, was it?" said Mr. Weller.

"To be sure it was," replied Job.

"Vell," said Sam, as they had now arrived near the Hotel, "I vant to have a little bit o' talk with you, Job; so if you're not partickler engaged, I should like to see you at the Great White Horse to-night, somewheres about eight o'clock."

"I shall be sure to come," said Job.

"Yes, you'd better," replied Sam, with a very meaning look, "or else I shall perhaps be askin' arter you, at the other side of the green gate, and then I might cut you out, you know."

"I shall be sure to be with you," said Mr. Trotter; and wringing Sam's hand with the utmost fervour, he walked away.

"Take care, Job Trotter, take care," said Sam, looking after him, "or I shall be one too many for you this time, I shall, indeed." Having uttered this soliloquy, and looked after Job till he was to be seen no more, Mr. Weller made the best of his way to his master's bed-room.

"It's all in training, sir," said Sam.

"What's in training, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"I have found 'em out, sir," said Sam.

"Found out who?"

"That 'ere queer customer, and the melan-choly chap with the black hair."

"Impossible, Sam!" said Mr. Pickwick, with the greatest energy—"Where are they, Sam; where are they?"

"Hush, hush!" replied Mr. Weller; and as he assisted Mr. Pickwick to dress, he detailed the plan of action on which he proposed to enter.

"But when is this to be done, Sam?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"All in good time, sir," replied Sam.

Whether it was done in good time, or not, will be seen hereafter.

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